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November/December 2010

American Girl

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crafts

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winter drinks

* What to do when
you get a **bad gift**

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our dazzling
dresses contest

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AMERICAN GIRL IS PUBLISHED BY
AMERICAN GIRL PUBLISHING, INC.
8400 Fairway Place
Middleton, WI 53562

E-mail address: readermail@americangirl.com
americangirlmagazine.com



Recommended by
Parents' Choice,
2009

The National
Magazine
Awards Finalist

American Girl®

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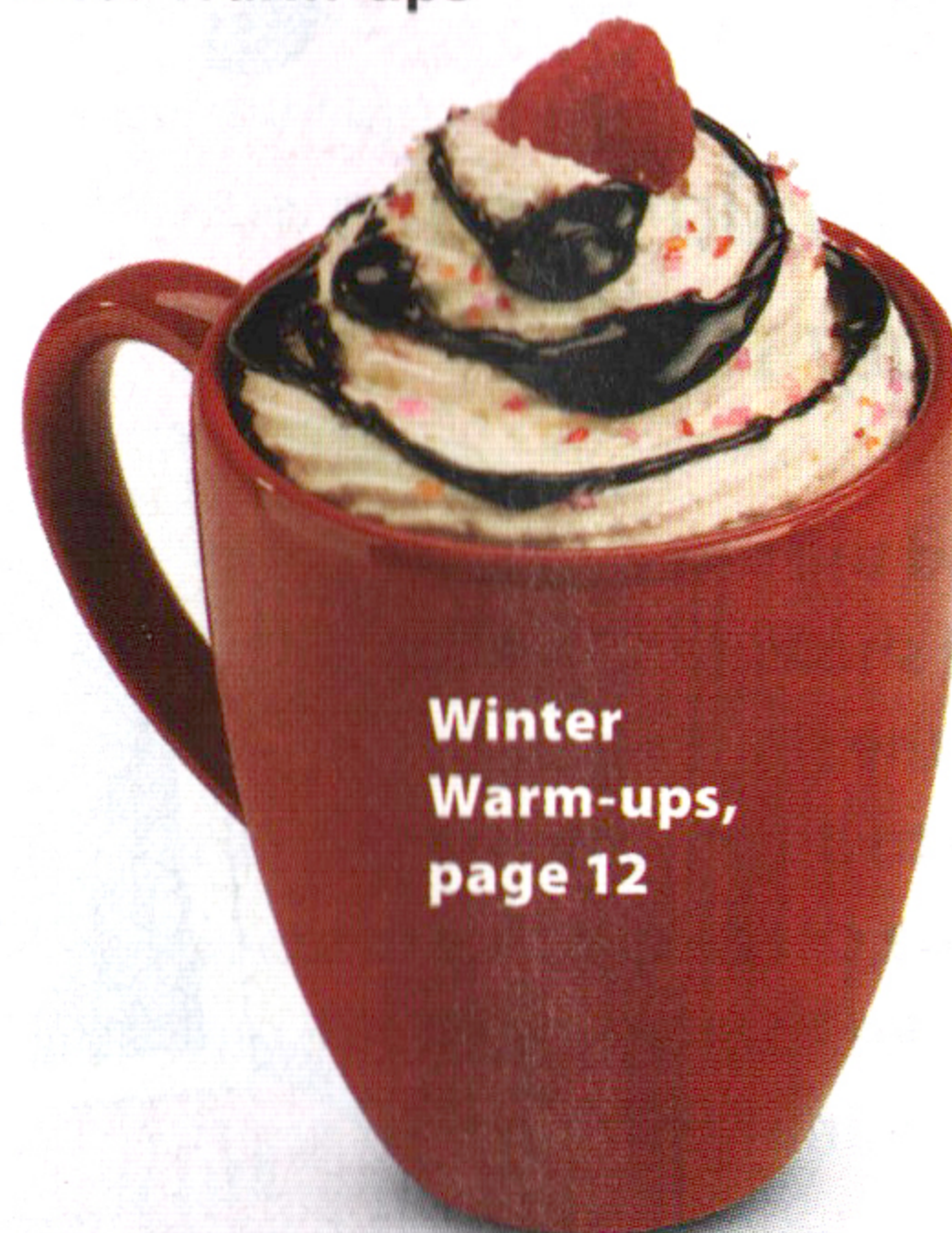
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Cover photo: Steven Talley

Girls

E X P R E S S

Wrist Twist

'Tis the season for using tape. Make a cute wrapped bracelet from an empty roll!

Save the **cardboard ring** from an empty roll of packing tape or duct tape, making sure that it fits easily over your hand. Use **tape** to attach one end of a long piece of pretty **ribbon** to the ring. Wrap the ribbon around

and around the ring until no cardboard shows through. Then trim the ribbon and use **craft glue** to attach the end to the inside of the bracelet. Let dry. Make it for yourself or as a last-minute gift!



Mia W., age 11, of Massachusetts sent us this idea. "I love this bangle—it's made from such simple supplies," she says.



Meet an AG Reader

Arula R.
Age 11, California

In my free time, I like to doodle, read, or design clothes. I also enjoy skating and writing plays, stories, and poems.

My favorite snack is a buttery pao. Pao is a warm Indian bun—it's really good.

I can't live without my cell phone, my MP3 player—and, believe it or not, my annoying little brother!

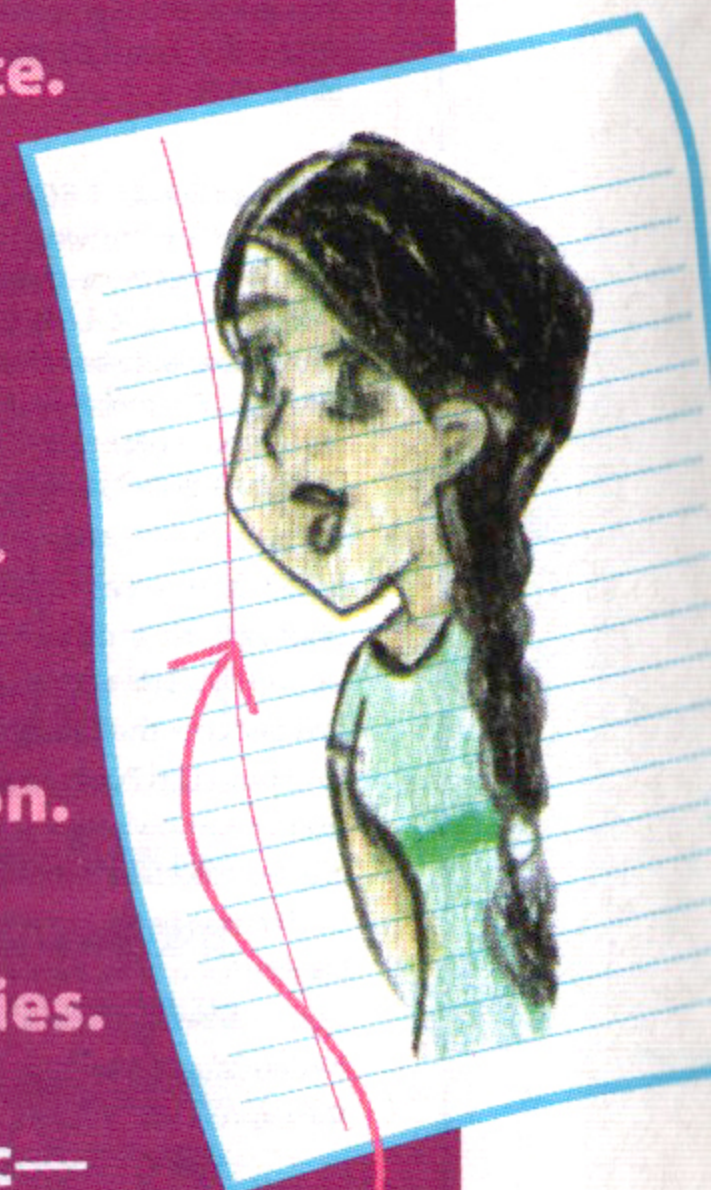
One thing my friends would say about me: that I give good advice

One thing people would never guess about me: I am allergic to nuts, and I absolutely don't like them! They sent me to the emergency room once.

In 20 years, I'll be a famous fashion designer who makes clothes for actresses.

My favorite part of AG is the story section. It always inspires me to write my own stories.

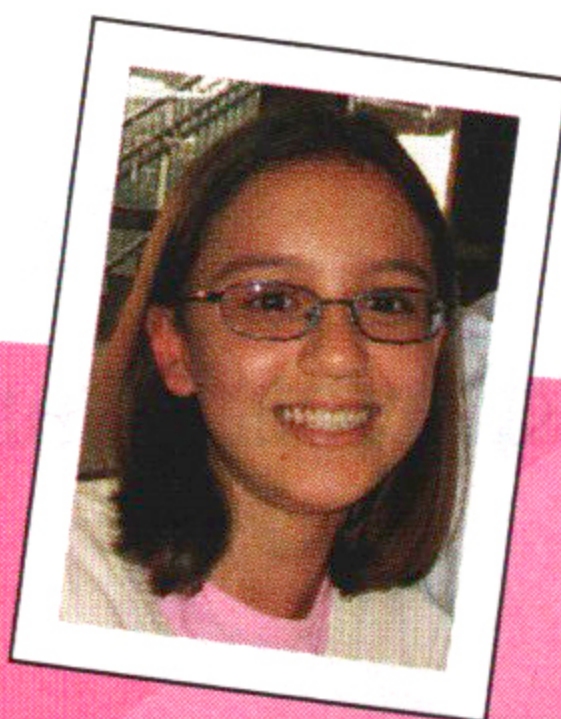
I am a doodle fanatic—I drew this doodle of myself!



Introduce Yourself!

To find out how to be a featured reader, go to americangirlmagazine.com and click on "Start the fun."

Shining Star



For the last three years, Miranda C. has delivered Christmas cheer to sick children. "When I was younger," she explains, "I spent five years getting cancer treatments. Sometimes it was scary in the clinic." After she recovered, the Florida girl—who's now 13—read a story in *American Girl* magazine about a girl helping others. Miranda got an idea to give gifts to the kids in the clinic where she had spent so much time herself.

Miranda hosted a holiday

party at her house to raise money, charging \$5 per guest and planning activities and snacks. She raised \$230, which she used to buy Christmas presents such as toys and books for kids at the clinic. Three years later, Miranda's Merry Mission has raised more than \$2,000 and has filled the clinic with holiday spirit.

"Good things come in small packages—that's always been my motto," Miranda says. "Even if you're small like me, you can do anything you set your mind to."


You can shine, too.

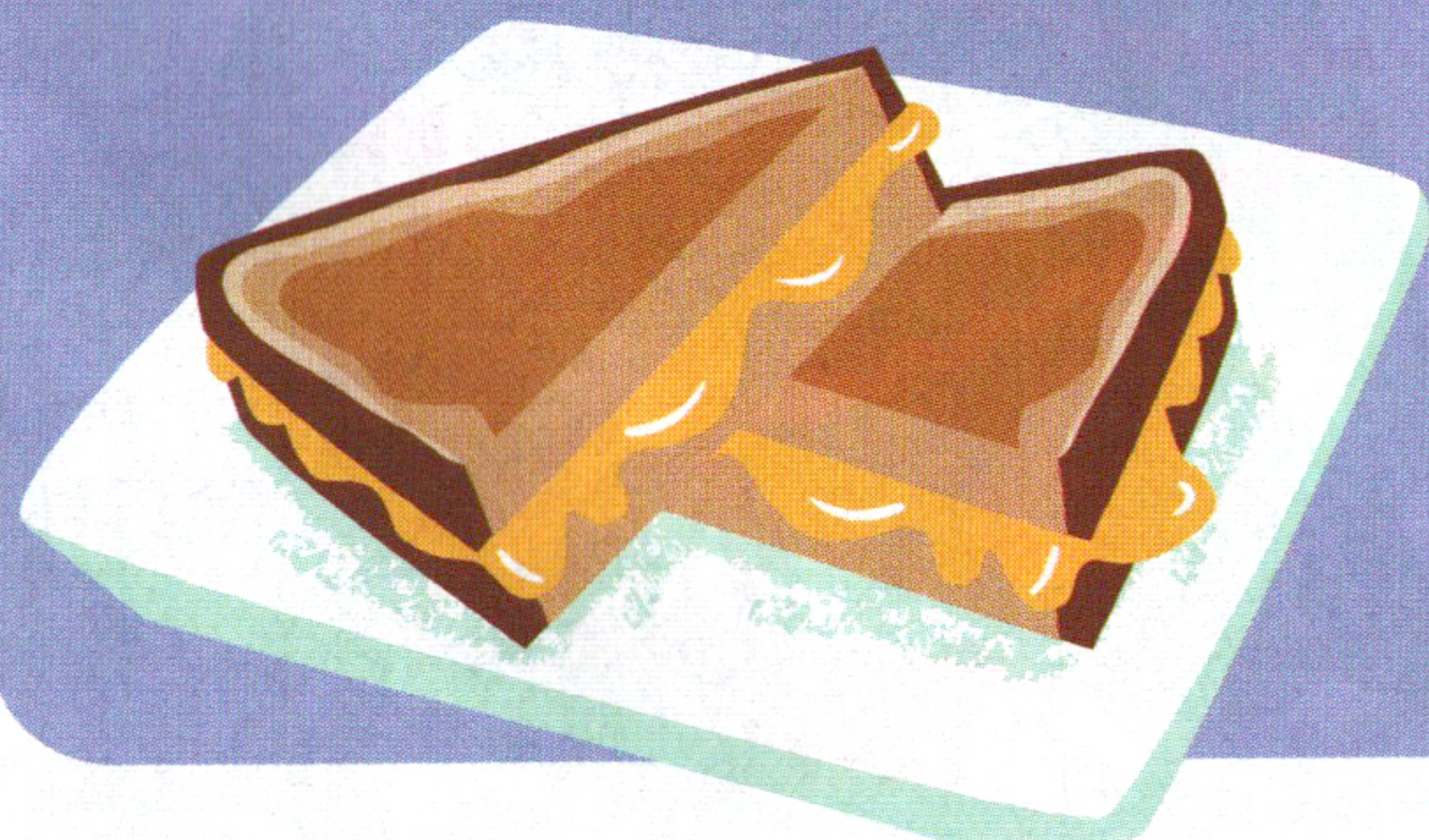
Host a charity movie night. With a parent's help, find out from local charities what kinds of holiday gifts they need for kids. Then ask each of your friends to bring a small gift to wrap during the party.



Reader Recipe

No-Stove Grilled Cheese

 Toast two slices of **bread**. Place a slice of **cheese** between the toast pieces, and place the sandwich on a microwave-safe plate. Ask an adult to microwave for about 10 seconds. Enjoy!



Rylie O.
Age 13, North Carolina

Send your yummy—and easy—recipes to the address on page 7.

Holiday This or That?

Choose your favorite options in our funny mini quiz—and then quiz a friend!

Would you rather...

ride to school in a horse-drawn sleigh
OR
in a bobsled?

be chased by a nutcracker soldier
OR
a snowman?

open a gift that contained \$1 million
OR
one granted wish?

be able to drink only hot chocolate
OR
only apple cider with every meal?

spend the holidays at a mountain lodge
OR
at a tropical resort?

frost 100 cookies
OR
wrap 100 presents?

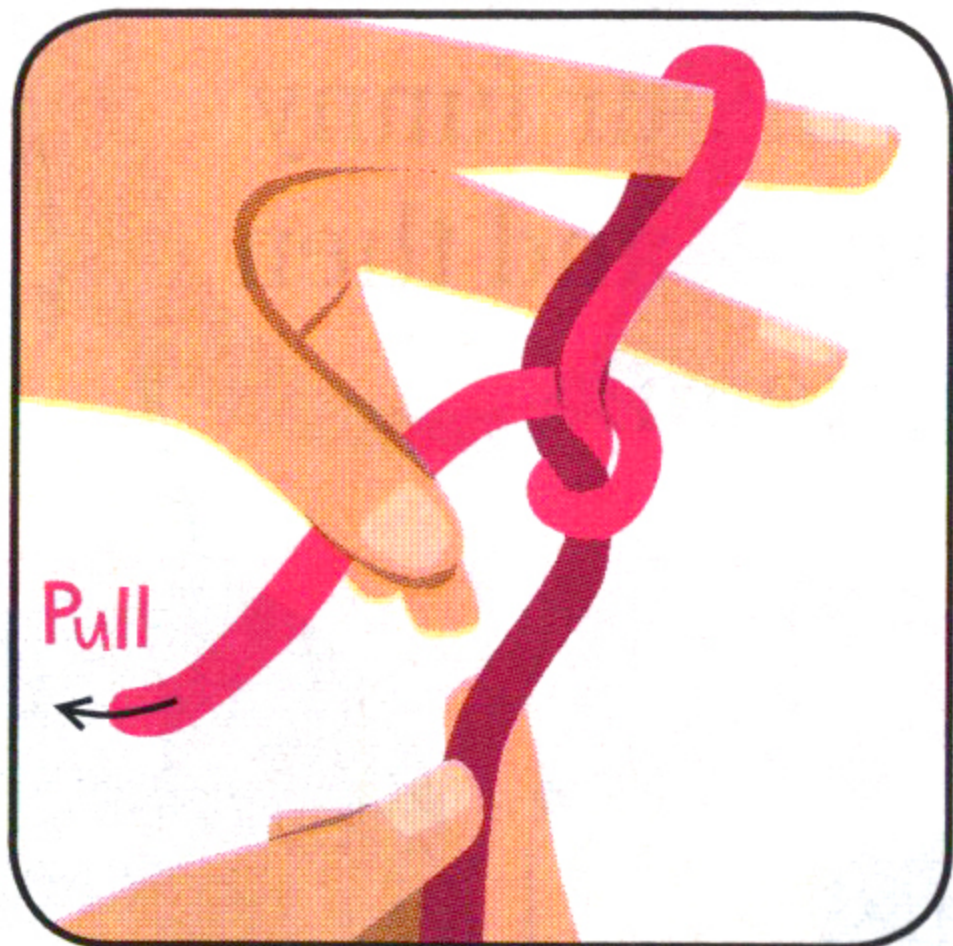
eat a pumpkin sandwich
OR
a turkey pie?

do without scissors
OR
without tape when wrapping presents?

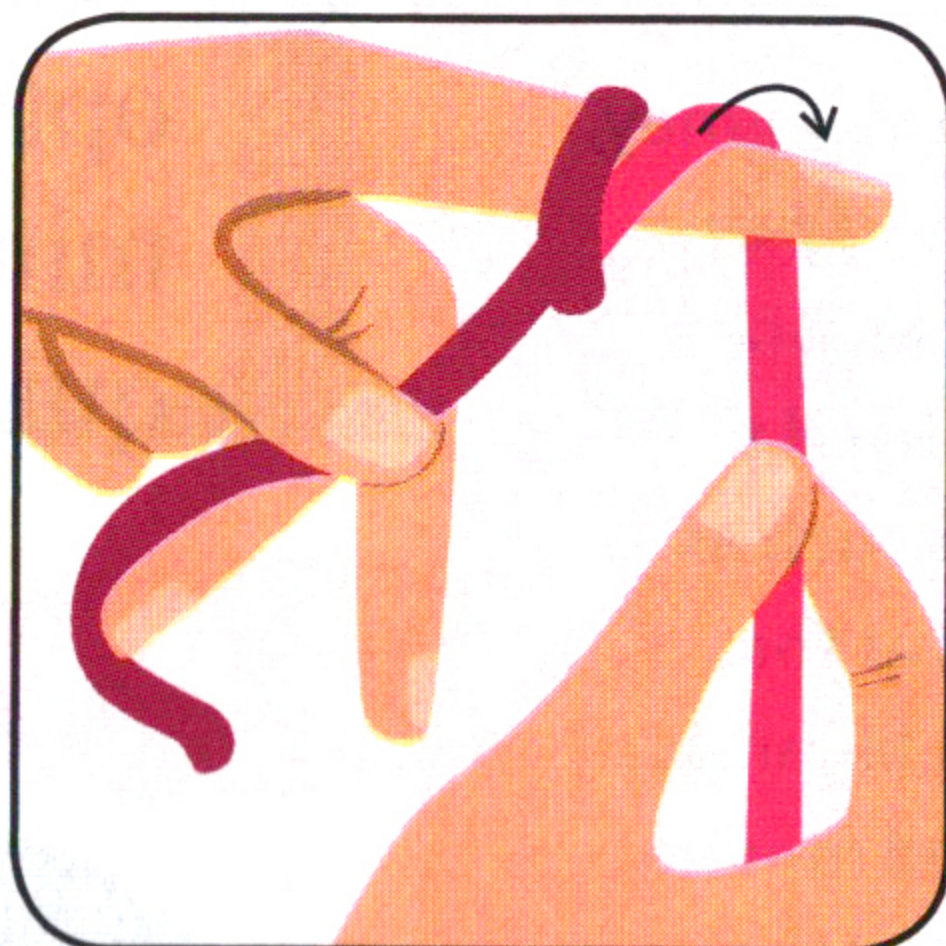
build a snow fort
OR
a pillow fort?

Knit It!

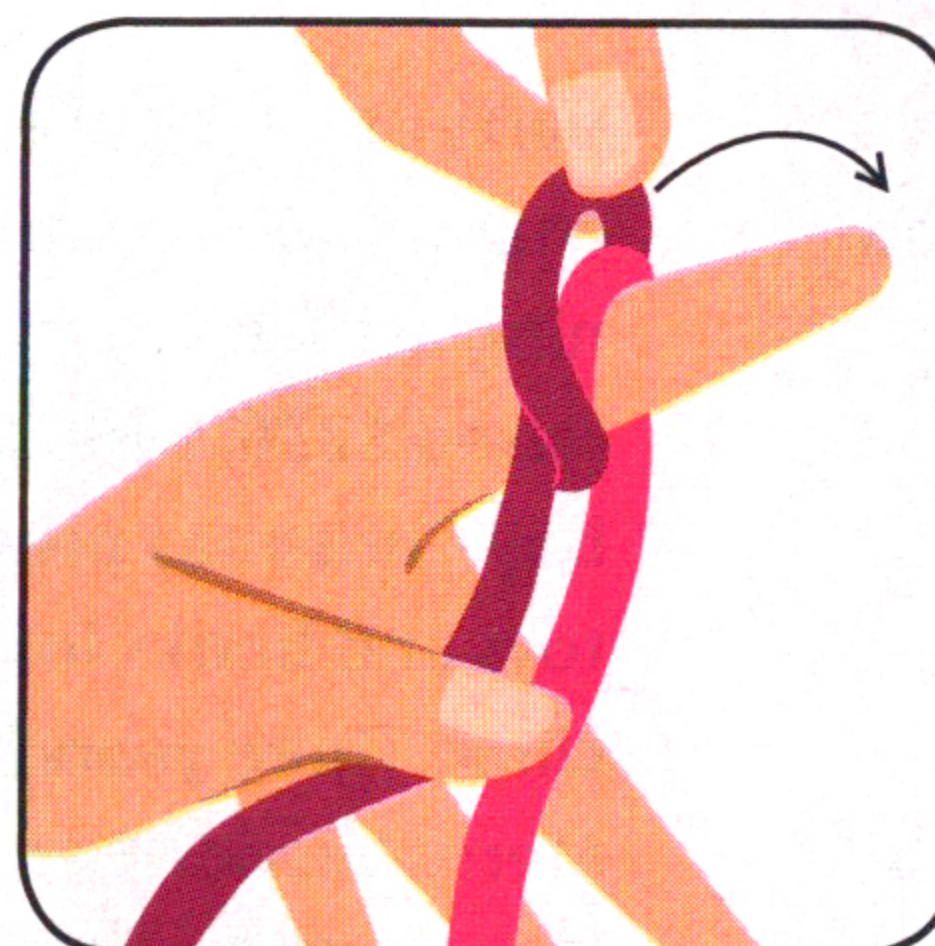
All you need are your hands and thick, pretty yarn to make a cool knitted creation.



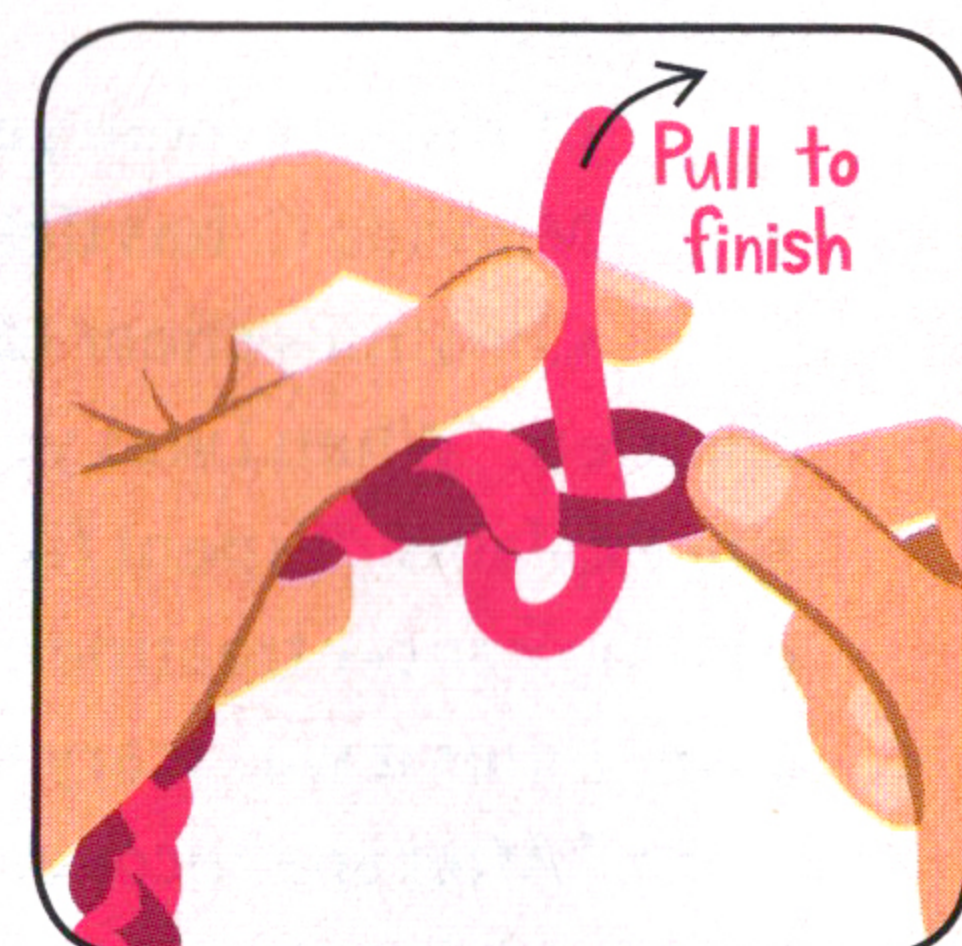
1. Start with a ball of yarn. Tie the yarn around your finger, like this: Lay the end of the yarn over your left index finger. Bring the short end around the long piece of yarn and tuck it through the loop. Pull the short end until it's snug, making a loop around your finger.



2. Hold the short end between your left thumb and middle finger. Wrap the long piece of yarn over your index finger, to the right of the first loop. Hold both ends between your left thumb and middle finger.



3. Gently lift the old loop over the new loop and off the end of your finger. One loop will stay on your finger. Pull both ends so that the loop is tight—but not too tight—against your finger.



4. Repeat steps 2 and 3, lifting a loop off your finger each time. To finish, lift off the last loop and cut off the unknit yarn, leaving a short tail. Tuck the tail through the last loop and pull tight.

Use your knitted garland to...

tie up a gift.



belt your pants.



decorate a tree.



Want to make a thicker knitted garland? Visit americangirlmagazine.com and click on "Start the fun" for a video that shows you how.

Family Festivities

Home for the holidays? Here's some fun stuff to do with family.

Dynamite Dinners

Time for Breakfast!

Who says waffles are only for breakfast? At dinnertime, feast on morning favorites—pancakes, sausage, eggs, and orange juice. Remind your family to wear their pajamas!



Beach Bash

Party at the beach! Lay beach towels on the floor for everyone to sit on during your dinner of sandwiches, chips, and punch. Wear sunglasses, and put on some tropical music.



TV Bingo

Use the TV as the caller in this fun game. Create cards with a nine-square grid on each. In each square, write down something you might see on a TV show—a computer, a person in a plaid shirt, or a black car. Make sure

each card is different. Hand out the cards, and put one person in charge of channel surfing. Players should cover the squares on their cards as they see the items on TV. The first one with a full line covered is the winner.



Special Skills

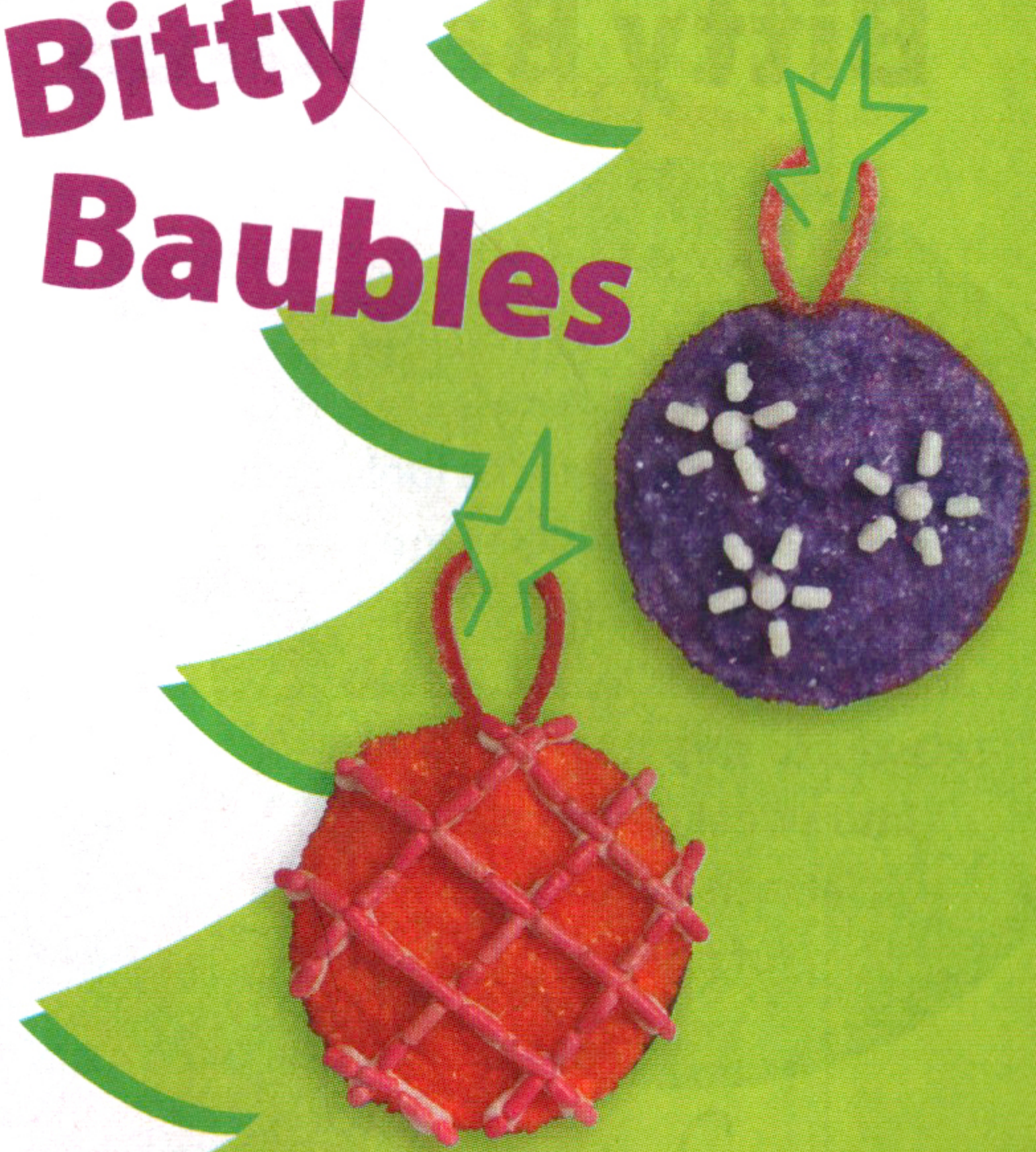
In this activity, everyone gets to be the expert. As a group, take turns teaching one another a trick or secret skill. You could demonstrate how to

whistle with two fingers. Mom could teach everyone how to make a French braid. Dad could teach the group how he makes perfectly crunchy bacon. When you're done, your family will be an even more talented bunch!

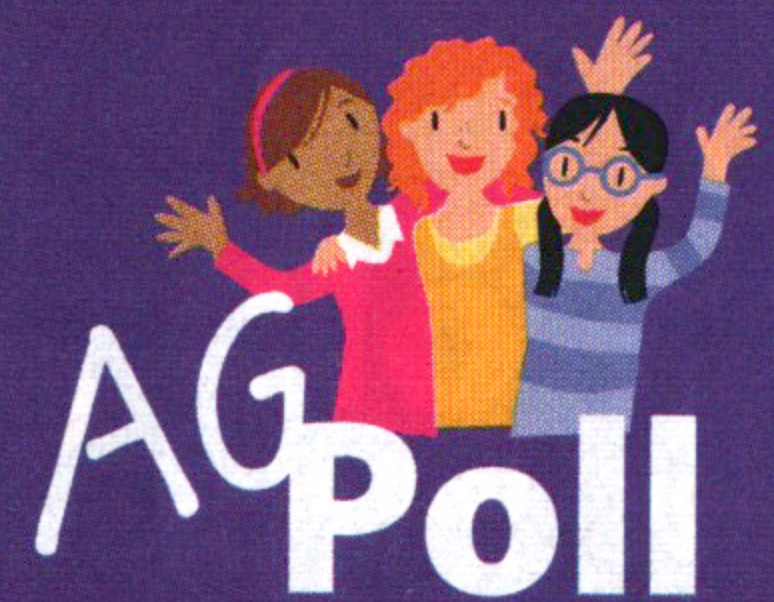


Creative Corner

Bitty Baubles



Cut out card. Flip over for directions.



Answer these questions, and then turn the page to see how your answers compare to those of other AG readers.

If you had \$20, what would you use it to buy?

- * music
- * a DVD
- * a new shirt
- * a necklace

What's your favorite kind of pie?

- * apple
- * chocolate cream
- * cherry
- * pumpkin



Bitty Baubles

Photos: Radlund Photography Styling: Tricia Doherty

Use a butter knife to spread **white frosting** on **vanilla wafer cookies**. Decorate the cookies to look like mini ornaments using **colored sugar, sprinkles, and small candies**. Use clean scissors to snip **licorice pieces** into sweet hangers, and attach with a dab of frosting.



AG Poll

What girls told us at

americangirlmagazine.com



Girls would use \$20 to buy:

30%

a new shirt

26%

music

23%

a DVD

21%

a necklace

Girls' pie favorites are:



37%

chocolate cream

28%

apple

26%

pumpkin

9%

cherry

To answer our weekly poll question, go to americangirlmagazine.com and click on "Fun for Girls."

Super Stumpers

Challenge your friends to solve these tricky riddles.

1.
When does Thanksgiving come after Christmas?

2.
What travels around the world but stays put in one corner?

3.
Can you spell "hard water" only using three letters?

Answers: 1. When it's in the dictionary; 2. a stamp; 3. i-c-e

True Story

All these sisters wanted for Christmas was for their dad to come home from war.

Dear American Girl,

Last December, we were not feeling very merry. Our dad had been deployed overseas with his National Guard unit for almost a year, and he couldn't come home for Christmas. Right before our holiday break from school, our classes got called into the library. A large package (it was about six feet tall!) stood in the middle of the room. It was wrapped in shiny silver paper and tied with sparkly red ribbon. The gift tag read "To Paige & Courtney." We had no clue what was in there.

We opened up the box, and a man was inside! At first we thought, "Who's that guy in the box?" But then we looked closer, and it was our dad—he looked unfamiliar because he'd grown a mustache! We were SO surprised. He smiled, hugged us, and said that he'd written a letter asking Santa to bring him home to us for Christmas. We had been missing our dad for so long, and having him home made us so, so happy.

Sincerely,

Paige V. and Courtney V.

Ages 11 and 8, Wisconsin

Paige



Courtney



AG Art Gallery

These readers ventured out into the cold with their cameras.

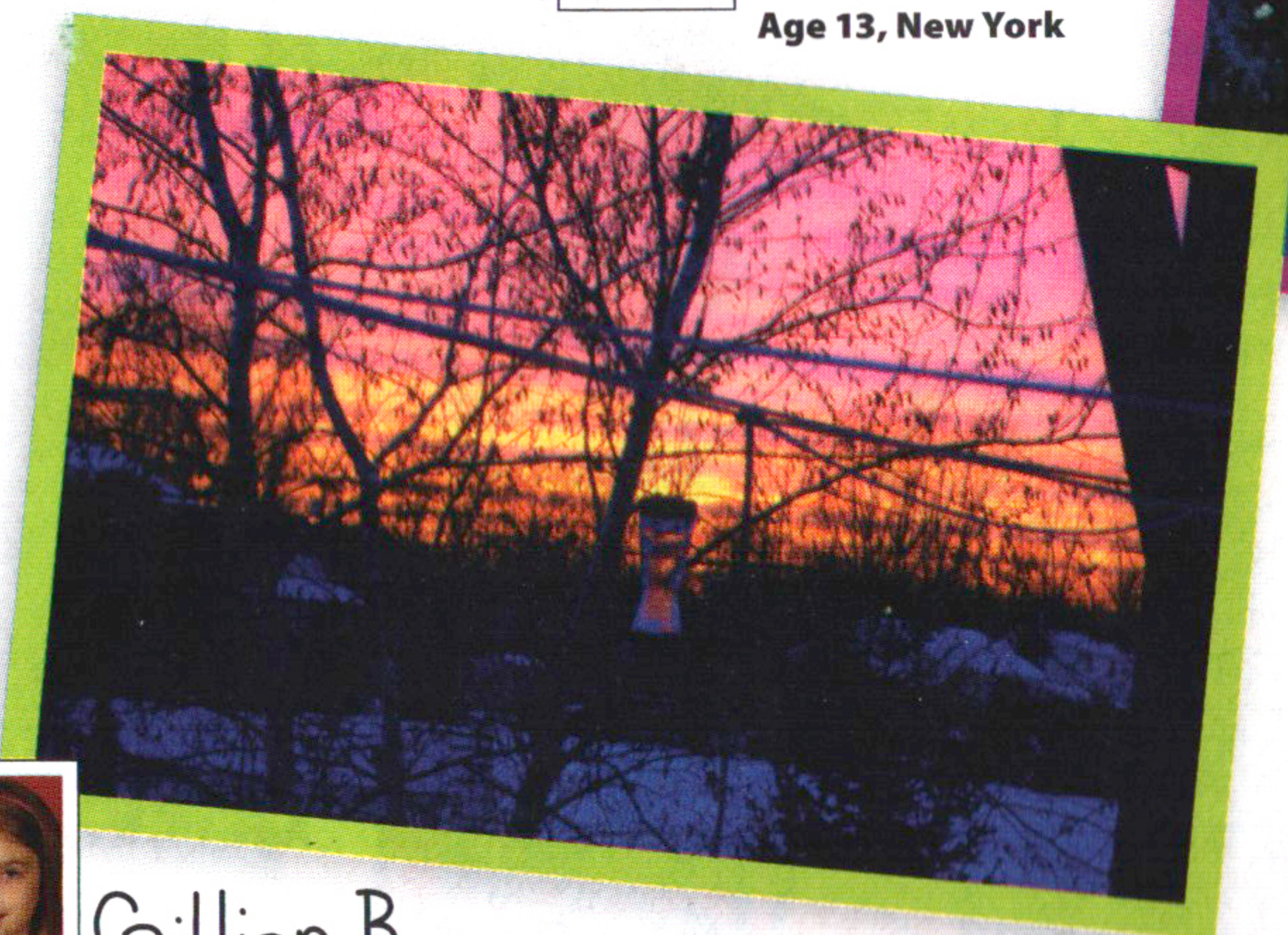
Help us fill our gallery! Send color copies of your **original artwork or photos** to the address below. Sorry, we can't return entries.



Cara S.
Age 13, New York



Helena B.
Age 10, West Virginia



Gillian B.
Age 11, Michigan



Sydney C.
Age 10, Nevada

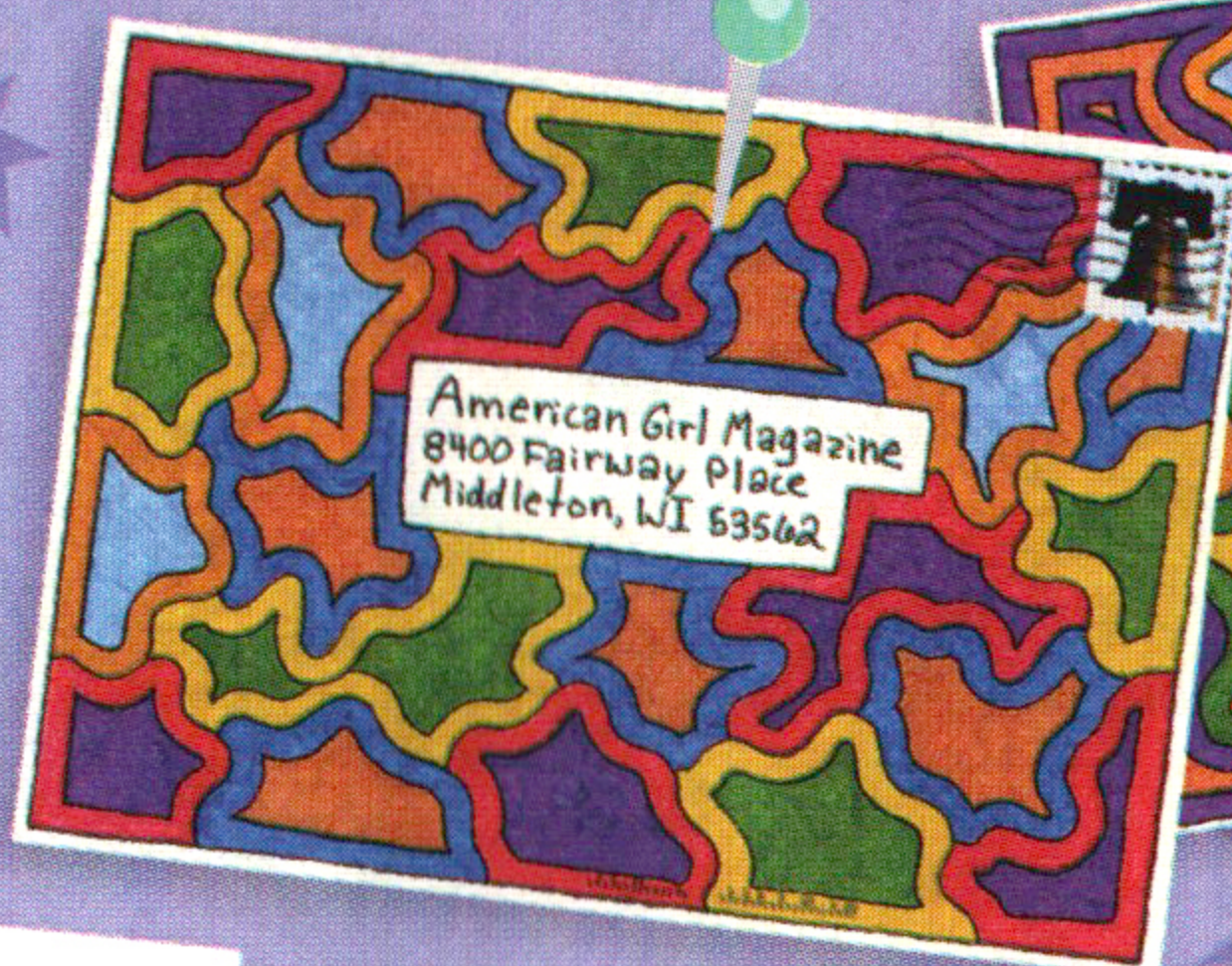
Write to Us

Be sure to include your

- * first and last name
- * address and phone number
- * birth date, including year
- * school photo or other portrait
- * parent's signature

Send us a cool envelope! Print our address neatly on the front and your return address on the back.

We can't print every letter, but we read everything you send to us. Hope to hear from you soon! ★



Vanessa's envelopes were so good that we couldn't decide which to use!



Envelope art by
Vanessa L.
Age 13, Washington

Dazzling Dresses

These gowns that girls designed will spread holiday cheer during the most wonderful time of the year!

Sleigh Belle



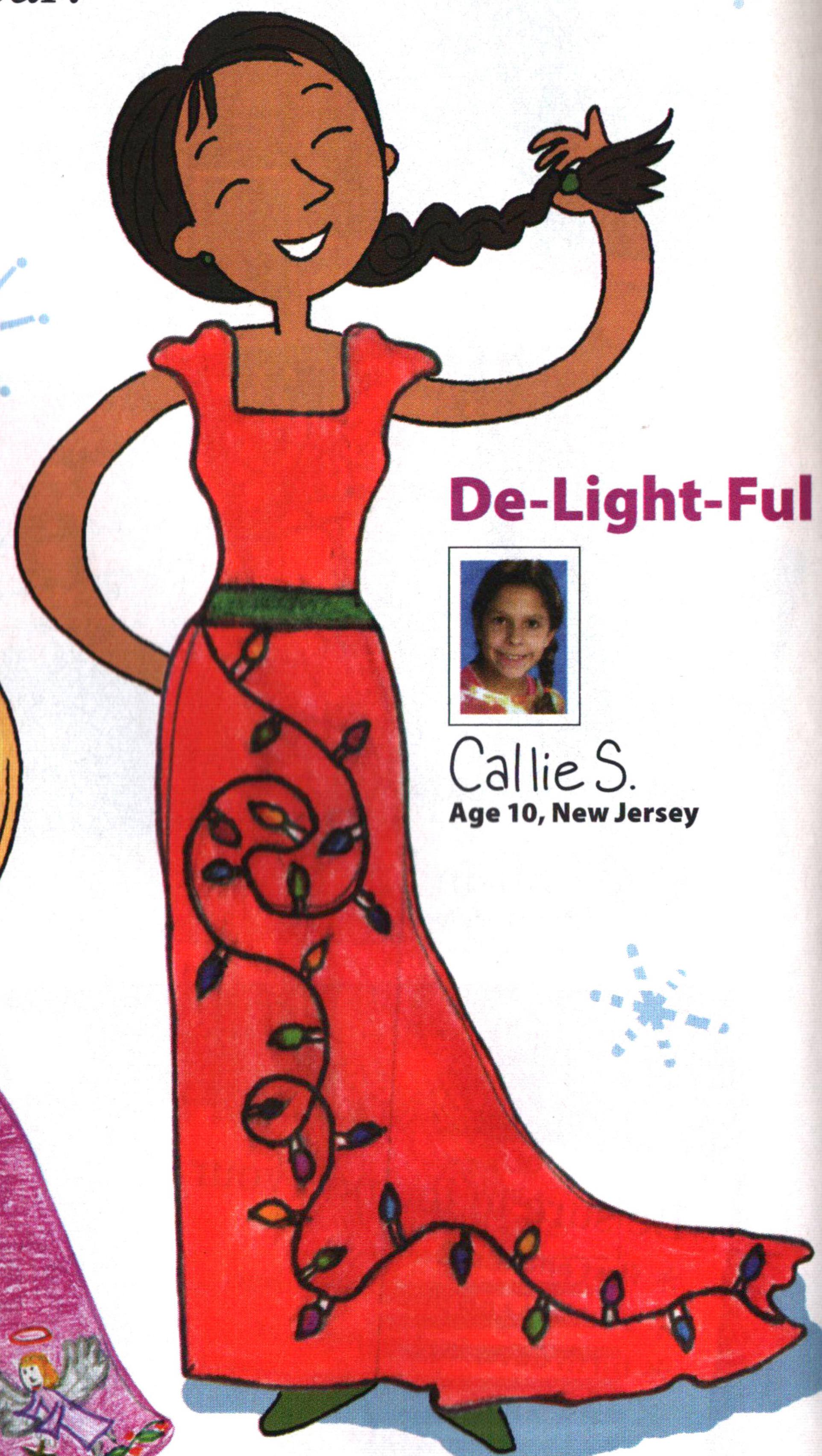
Courtney B.
Age 11, Idaho



De-Light-Ful



Callie S.
Age 10, New Jersey



Snow Angels



Mia J.
Age 8, Michigan



Fancy Flakes



Erika S.
Age 13, Texas



Eye Candy



Hannah L.
Age 12, Ohio



Ice Princess



Megan S.
Age 11, Indiana



Happy Holly-days



Jessie S.
Age 12, Washington



Winter Wonder



Maddie B.
Age 13, Colorado



New Contest: Terrific T-shirts

Create a T-shirt that's unique—like you! What represents your personality? Is it a sport you enjoy playing, your collections, or your favorite colors? Draw a tee that makes you say, "That's so me!" Send your T-shirt drawing to the address on page 7, along with your first and last name, address, school photo, and birth date. Postmark deadline: December 10, 2010. Winners will appear in the May/June 2011 issue. Sorry, we can't return entries. ★

For a fun
word-matching
activity, turn to
Behind the Scenes
on page 48!

What's your new word for the dictionary?



fanquistoric \fan-qui-STOR-ick\
adjective: fantastic beyond words



"That pumpkin pie was just
fanquistoric!" exclaimed Casey.

Audrey H.
Age 11, Texas



frizzelfizzion \FRIZZ-el-fizz-shun\
noun: the act of spinning around in
circles repeatedly



After doing some **frizzelfizzion**,
Bailey fell on the couch and giggled.

Rachel S.
Age 10, Minnesota



fruzzie \FRUZZ-ee\
noun: a person who is both a cousin and a friend
"My cousin Andrea and I are best **fruzzies!**" said Molly.

Kate Davis H.
Age 9, Alabama

blahwoop \BLAH-woop\
noun: a silly mistake
After Iris sprayed whipped cream all over
the kitchen, she said, "Oops!
I made a **blahwoop.**"



Lauren D.
Age 11, Minnesota

Kate Davis and her
fruzzie, Emily!





nausilicious \naw-sil-ISH-us\

adjective: having a nervous but excited feeling when going down a steep hill of a roller coaster

As Kelly reached the top of the roller coaster, she started to feel *nausilicious*.



Ava B.
Age 10, Michigan

oyjoyly \oy-JOY-lee\

adverb: overflowing with joy and happiness

When Cassandra won the spelling bee, she *oyjoyly* accepted the award.



CAYLA E.
Age 12, Nevada



pherangle \fur-AN-gull\

verb: to doodle randomly

Jennifer will often *pherangle* during math class.



Ella S.
Age 11, New York

speedaflofunas \speed-a-FLOW-foon-ahs\

adjective: super fast

Avery is so *speedaflofunas*—she always wins the 100-meter dash.



August Leigh F.
Age 11, Florida



tilliconosis \til-i-con-OH-sis\

noun: the sensation after drinking soda that bubbles are in your nose

Lilly had *tilliconosis* when she drank her orange soda too fast.



Sam M.
Age 11, Massachusetts

Next question!



Annie S.

This question is from 14-year-old Annie S. of Iowa: "What is your favorite thing to do with your friends? I like to watch movies with my pals and share a big bowl of popcorn while we wear our pajamas."

Send your answers to Annie's question to the address on page 7. Postmark deadline: December 10, 2010. Some answers will appear in the May/June 2011 issue. ★

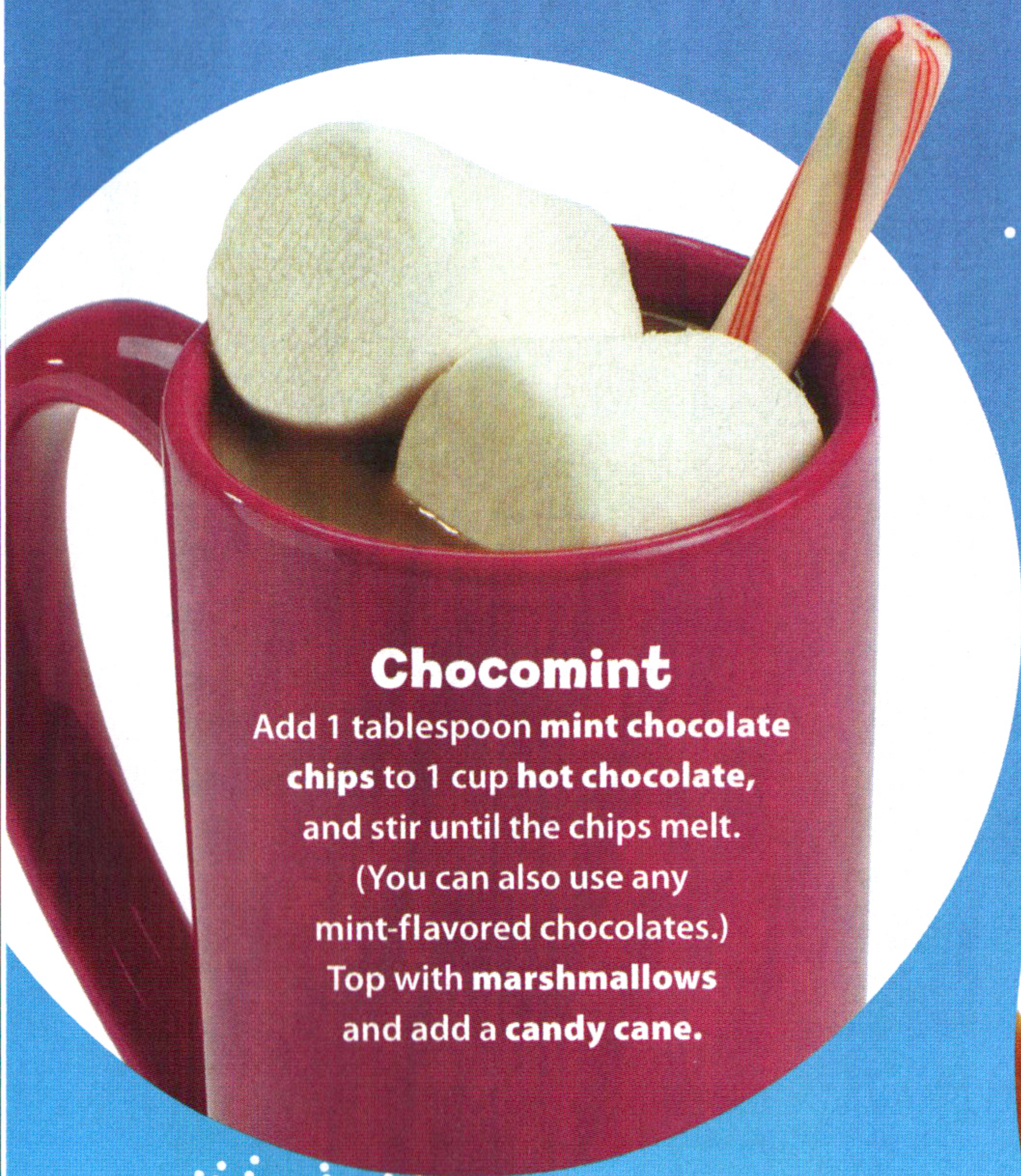
Have you always wanted to know something about other *American Girl* readers? Send us your questions, and you may be featured in an upcoming issue!

Winter Warm-ups

Say bye to *brrrr* with hot-chocolate treats!



For each of these recipes, you'll need plain hot-chocolate mix or milk. Ask an adult to help you first warm the hot chocolate or milk in the microwave. Have the mix-ins and toppings ready. If the flavor isn't strong enough, add more mix-ins.



Chocomint

Add 1 tablespoon **mint chocolate chips** to 1 cup **hot chocolate**, and stir until the chips melt. (You can also use any mint-flavored chocolates.) Top with **marshmallows** and add a **candy cane**.



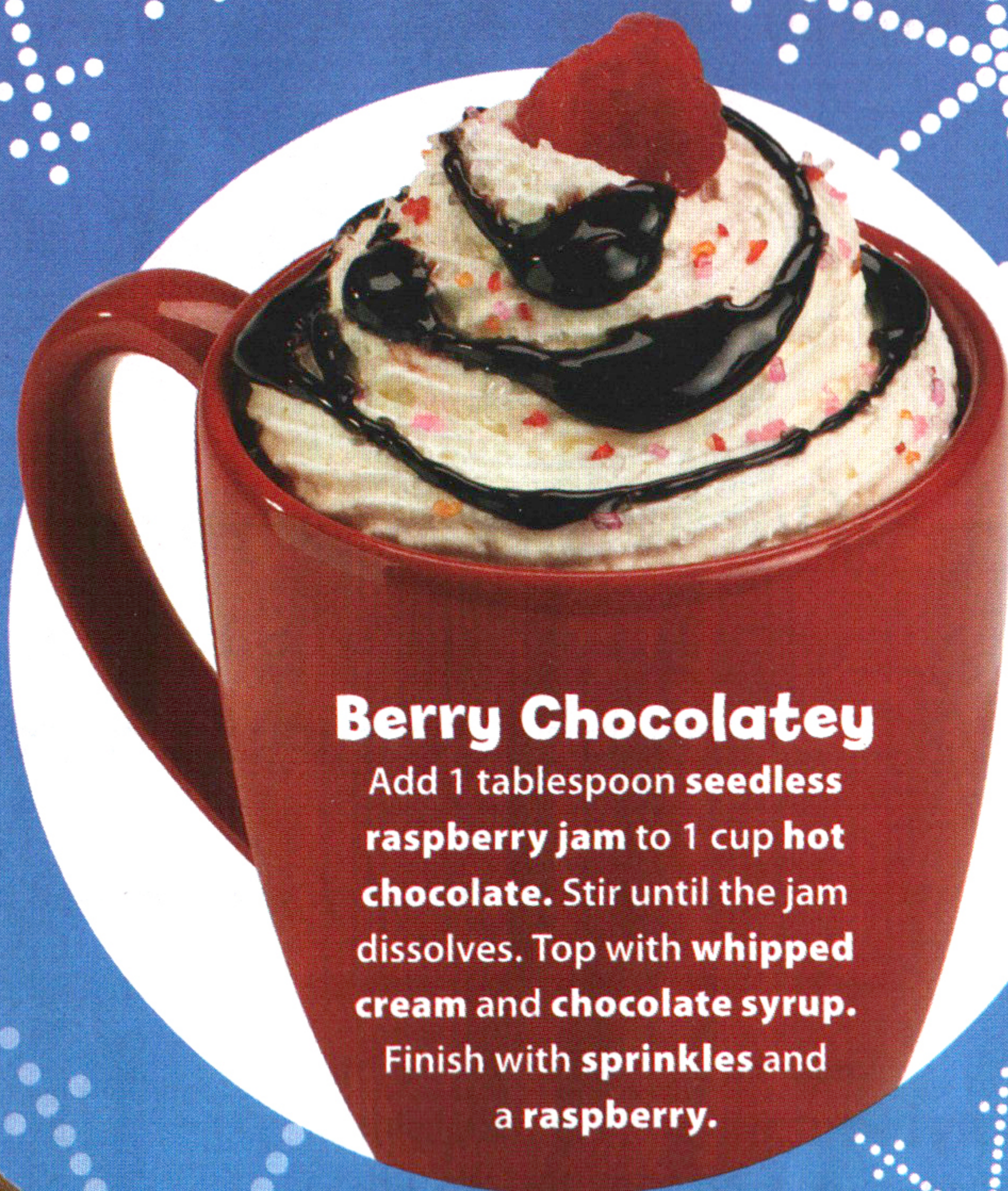
Pumpkin Pie

Add 1 tablespoon **canned pumpkin** and 1 teaspoon **brown sugar** to 1 cup **hot chocolate**. Stir until blended. Add a swirl of **whipped cream** and top with **sprinkles** and **crushed graham crackers**.



Snowball Float

Add 2 tablespoons **white chocolate chips** to 1 cup **hot milk**. Stir until the chips melt. Put one scoop **vanilla ice cream** on top and sprinkle with **white chocolate chips** and **snowflake sprinkles**.



Berry Chocolatey

Add 1 tablespoon **seedless raspberry jam** to 1 cup **hot chocolate**. Stir until the jam dissolves. Top with **whipped cream** and **chocolate syrup**. Finish with **sprinkles** and a **raspberry**.



Gingersnappy Happy

Start with 1 cup **hot chocolate**. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon each **ground ginger**, **allspice**, and **cinnamon**. Top with **whipped cream**. Decorate the mug—make a small notch in a soft **gingersnap**, and place the cookie on the rim.



Creamy Caramel

Start with 1 cup **hot milk**. Add 2 tablespoons **white chocolate chips** and stir until melted. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon **caramel sauce** and stir. Finish with **whipped cream**, **caramel sauce**, and **candy corn**. ★

Getting Gifts

Opening gifts, saying thanks,
and what to say when
you're thinking *yuck!*

by Apryl Lundsten

Yay! Presents!

When you open presents, spend a little time with each gift. Don't just dash from one present to the next. Take a moment to look each item over and really let the giver know you appreciate her thought.

"Great poster. I love puppies!"

"Wow, this looks like fun!"

"Pink is my favorite color!"



Keeping track

When opening gifts, ask Mom or one of your friends to keep track of what you're getting. Have her write down what the gift is and who gave it to you. This will be helpful when you write thank-you notes.



| FROM | GIFT |
|----------|-------------|
| Sarah | earrings |
| Michelle | gel pens |
| Loni | craft kit |
| Kera | puzzle book |
| Julie | T-shirt |
| Anna | PJs |
| Tami | travel game |
| Erika | purse |



Not my style

Yuck! Your friend got you the ugliest kitten sweater ever. You totally hate it—but there's no reason to hurt her feelings and tell her you do. Even if you absolutely can't stand the gift, try to say something positive about it.

"How unique."

"This is so thoughtful of you!"

"I've never seen anything like this sweater before."

Double trouble

Sometimes you might get the same gift from two different people at the same party. If this happens, laugh it off. Say:

"We know who has good taste."

"Two's company!"

"One for my house and one to keep at Grandma's house!"

Gift overload

When you're done opening all your gifts, try not to feel let down that there aren't more. Take a few deep breaths and give a quick speech about how grateful you are to be surrounded by so many friends who care about you.

I just want
to thank everyone
for being here. You're
all so special to me.
I couldn't ask for
better friends!

Thanks

Writing a thank-you note for a gift within a week or so of the party is an absolute must. It's fine to say thank you in person, over the phone, or through an e-mail or text message, but those ways don't replace a handwritten note. It might seem like a pain, but you don't want to seem ungrateful to someone who went out of her way to do something nice for you.

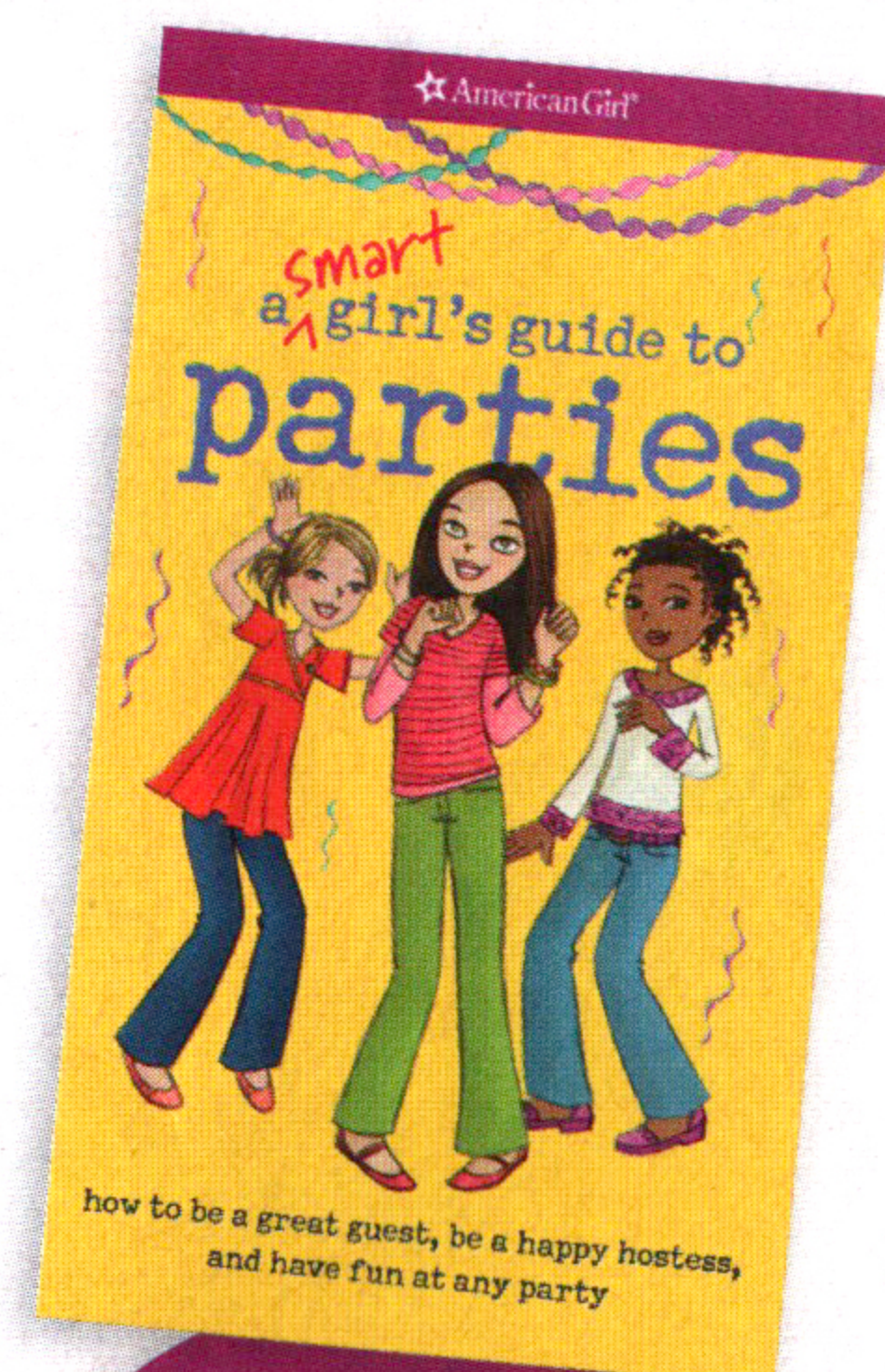
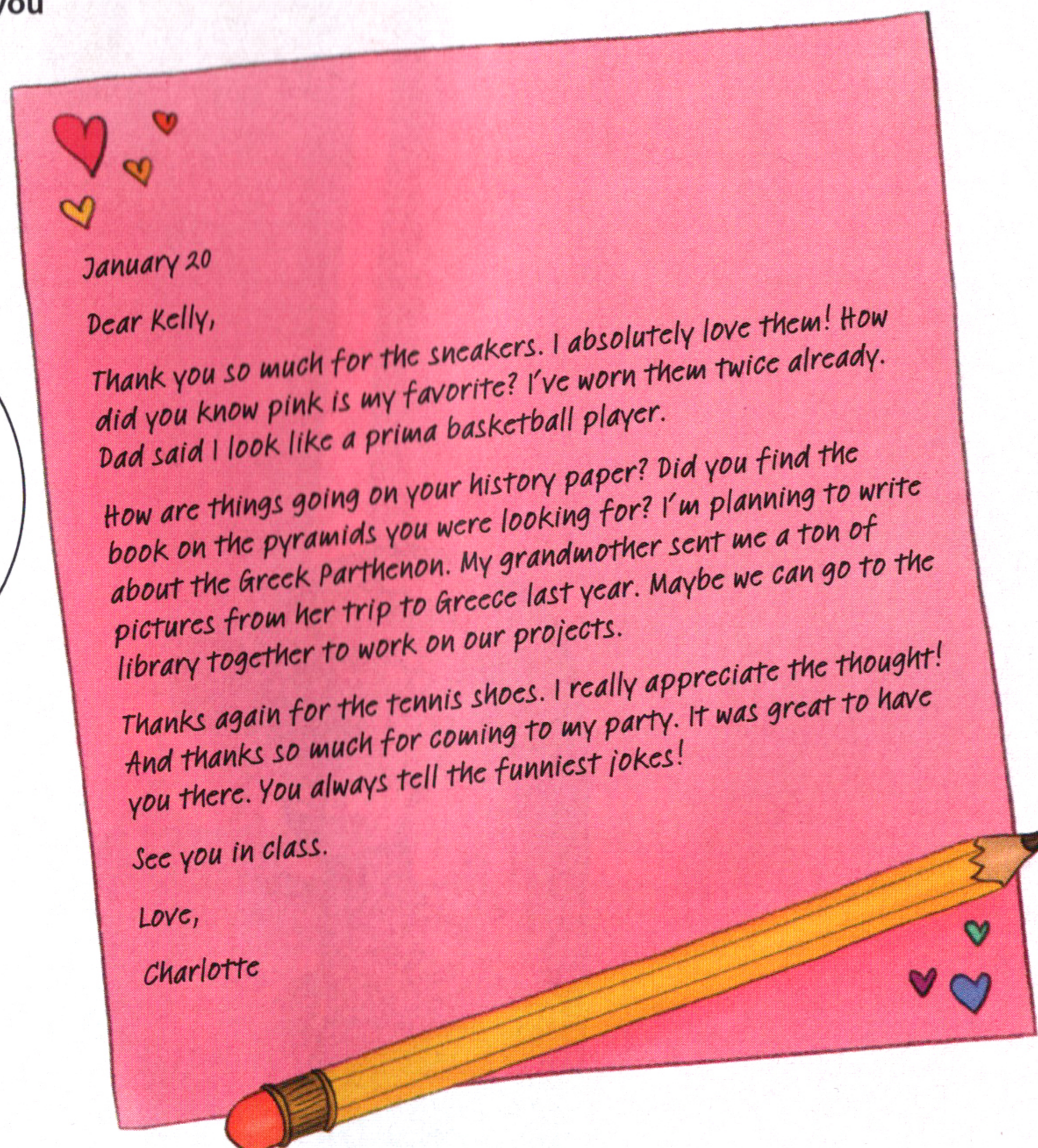


Your thank-you note


Need help writing a thank-you note? Use this sample letter to get ideas for what to say.

Remember...

Gifts are fun to get, and for many people, gifts are fun to give, too. Let the celebration begin! ★



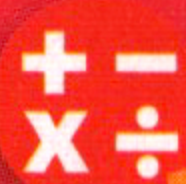
More great
info about gifts and
parties can be found in
**A Smart Girl's Guide
to Parties**, available
in bookstores.

Fun things
to do at
innerstar !



Help-Desk Hubbub

In which school subjects are you an expert? Take this quiz to find out your specialties—and then learn how to use your skills in American Girl's new online world.



1. Perimeter measures what?

- a. the distance around an object
- b. the area within an object
- c. the distance across an object
- d. the distance between two objects



4. All kittens are born with what color eyes?

- a. black
- b. green
- c. yellow
- d. blue



6. What sort of writing has a stanza?

- a. a short story
- b. a novel
- c. a poem
- d. a newspaper article



2. Which of the following is the correct spelling?

- a. embarrass
- b. embarass
- c. embaras
- d. embarras



5. Mountain, racing, and road are types of what?

- a. skis
- b. snowboards
- c. inline skates
- d. bicycles



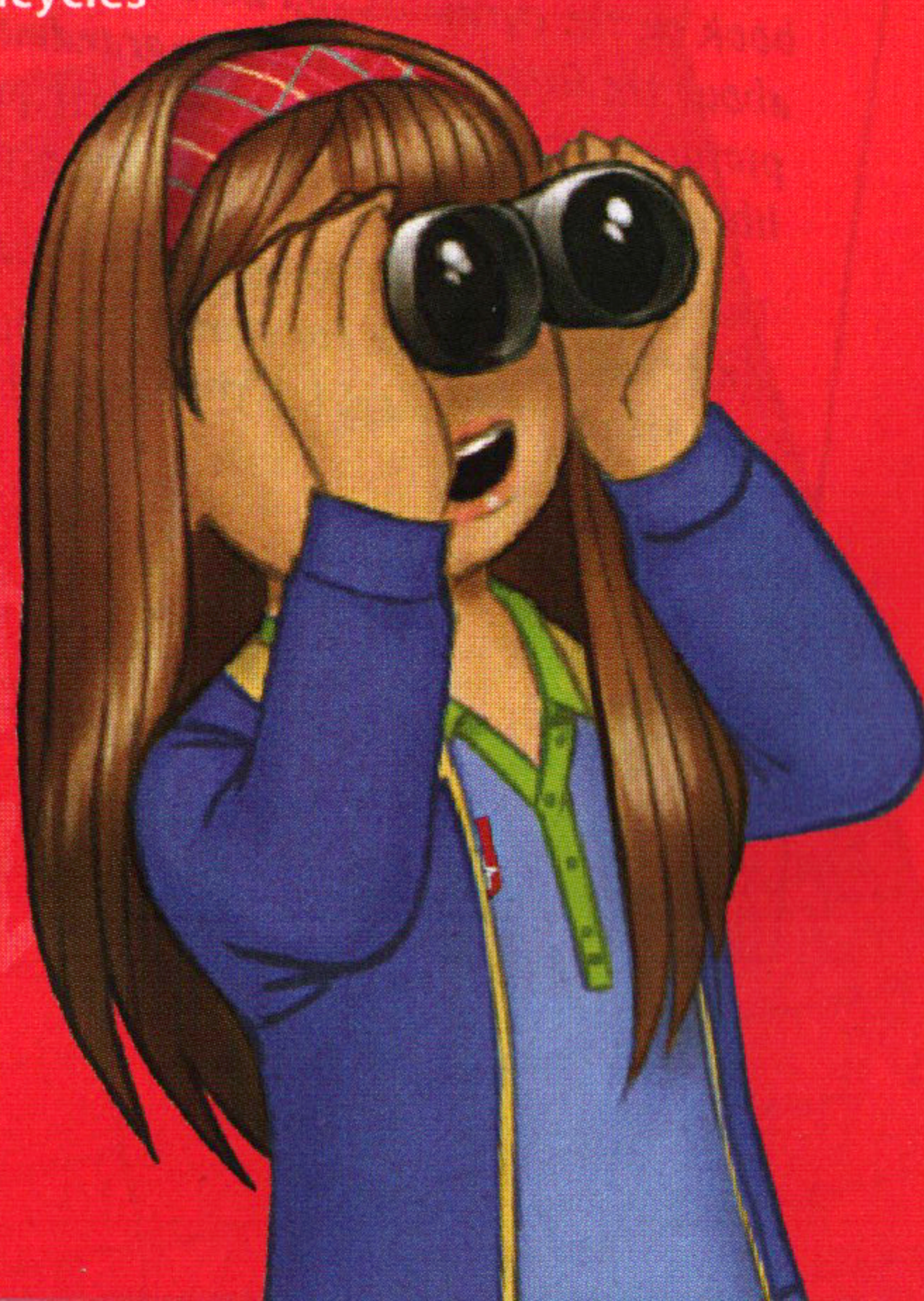
7. Ana has 12 medals from gymnastics. She hangs them in 4 rows. How many medals are in each row?

- a. 4
- b. 3
- c. 8
- d. 7



3. The United States falls into which two hemispheres?

- a. Southern and Western hemispheres
- b. Western and Eastern hemispheres
- c. Northern and Western hemispheres
- d. Eastern and Northern hemispheres





8. What country has the largest population on earth?

- a. China
- b. United States
- c. India
- d. Indonesia



9. What animal makes a cocoon?

- a. cuckoo
- b. raccoon
- c. cockroach
- d. moth



10. Three hours after 10:00 A.M. is what time?

- a. 1:00 P.M.
- b. 1:00 A.M.
- c. 7:00 A.M.
- d. 7:00 P.M.



11. Which of these sentences is correct?

- a. Rachel invited you and I to her party.
- b. Rachel invited you and me to her party.
- c. Rachel invited you and myself to her party.
- d. Rachel invited you and my to her party.



12. The *triple jump* is also known as what?

- a. the jump, jump, and hop
- b. the step, hop, and jump
- c. the hop, step, and jump
- d. the hip, hop, and jump



13. Quickly, slowly, and greatly are all what?

- a. verbs
- b. nouns
- c. prepositions
- d. adverbs



14. In soccer, how far is the penalty spot from the goal line?

- a. 11 yards
- b. 15 yards
- c. 10 feet
- d. 1 mile



15. What kind of animal is called a *flying fox*?

- a. bat
- b. bird
- c. fish
- d. fox



16. What percentage of the earth's surface is covered with water?

- a. about 55 percent
- b. about 21 percent
- c. 98.6 percent
- d. about 71 percent





17. What do you call a baby goat?

- a. a kid
- b. a calf
- c. a fawn
- d. a goatee



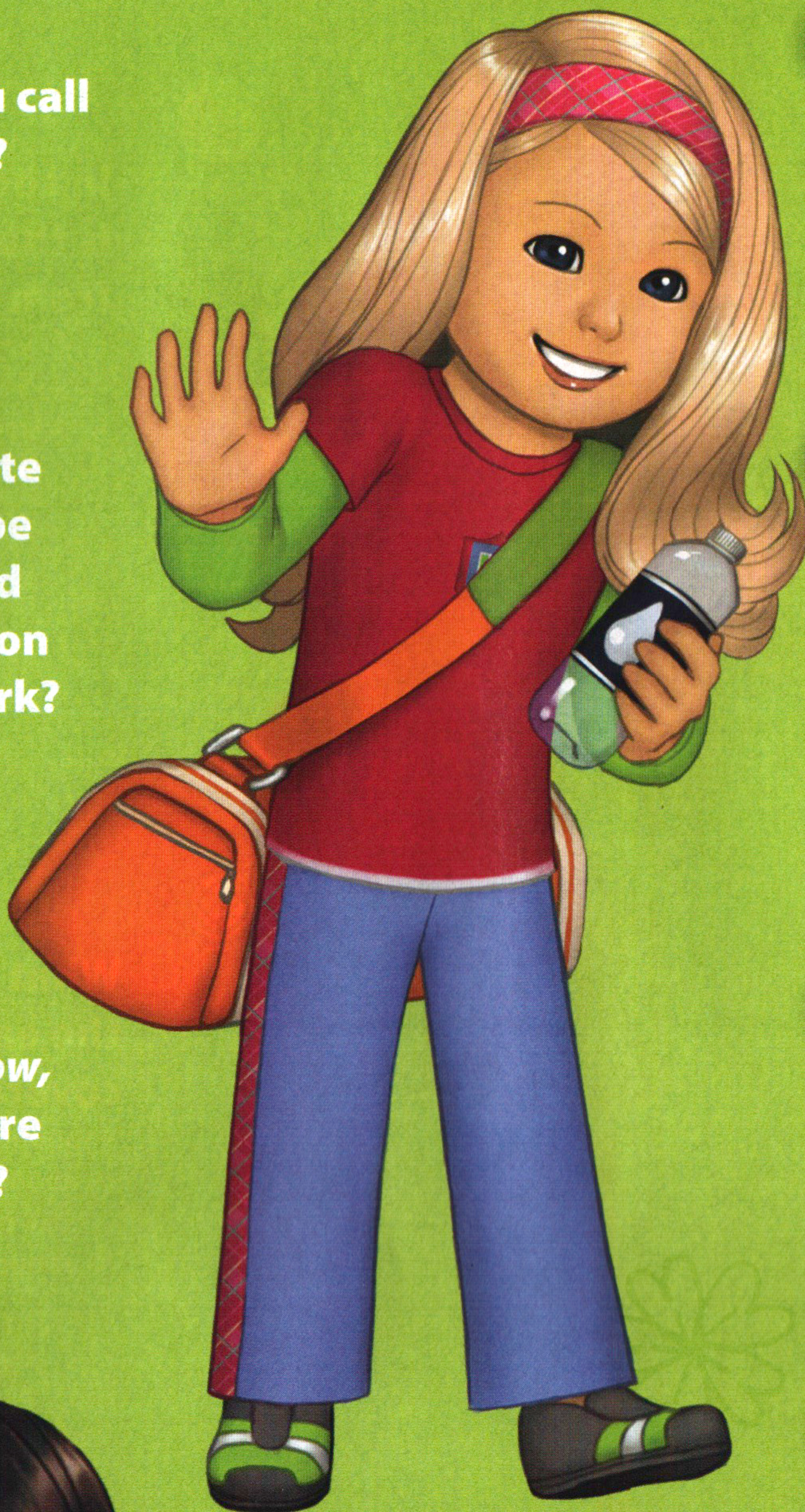
18. In which state would you be if you visited Grand Canyon National Park?

- a. Nevada
- b. Arizona
- c. New Mexico
- d. California



19. Words such as *moo*, *meow*, and *quack* are called what?

- a. onomatopoeia
- b. adjectives
- c. French words
- d. types of milk



22. The Roman numeral III is equal to what?

- a. 30
- b. 3
- c. 11
- d. 111



23. Which river is the longest in the United States?

- a. Mississippi River
- b. Rio Grande
- c. Missouri River
- d. Colorado River



24. In bowling, three strikes in a row is called a what?

- a. rooster
- b. turkey
- c. gobble-gobble
- d. goose



25. An *herbivore* is an animal that eats what?

- a. only herbs
- b. only meat
- c. only plants
- d. only bugs



26. What is the plural of *deer*?

- a. deer
- b. deers
- c. does
- d. deeries



20. Which of these does not equal the others?

- a. $8 \div 4$
- b. $10 \div 5$
- c. $15 \div 3$
- d. $4 \div 2$



21. What sport has *fairways*, *roughs*, and *greens*?

- a. golf
- b. judo
- c. surfing
- d. horse racing





27. How many inches are in a foot?

- a. 10
- b. 12
- c. 100
- d. 3



28. What female animals are called *fillies* or *mares*?

- a. horses
- b. pigs
- c. elephants
- d. goldfish



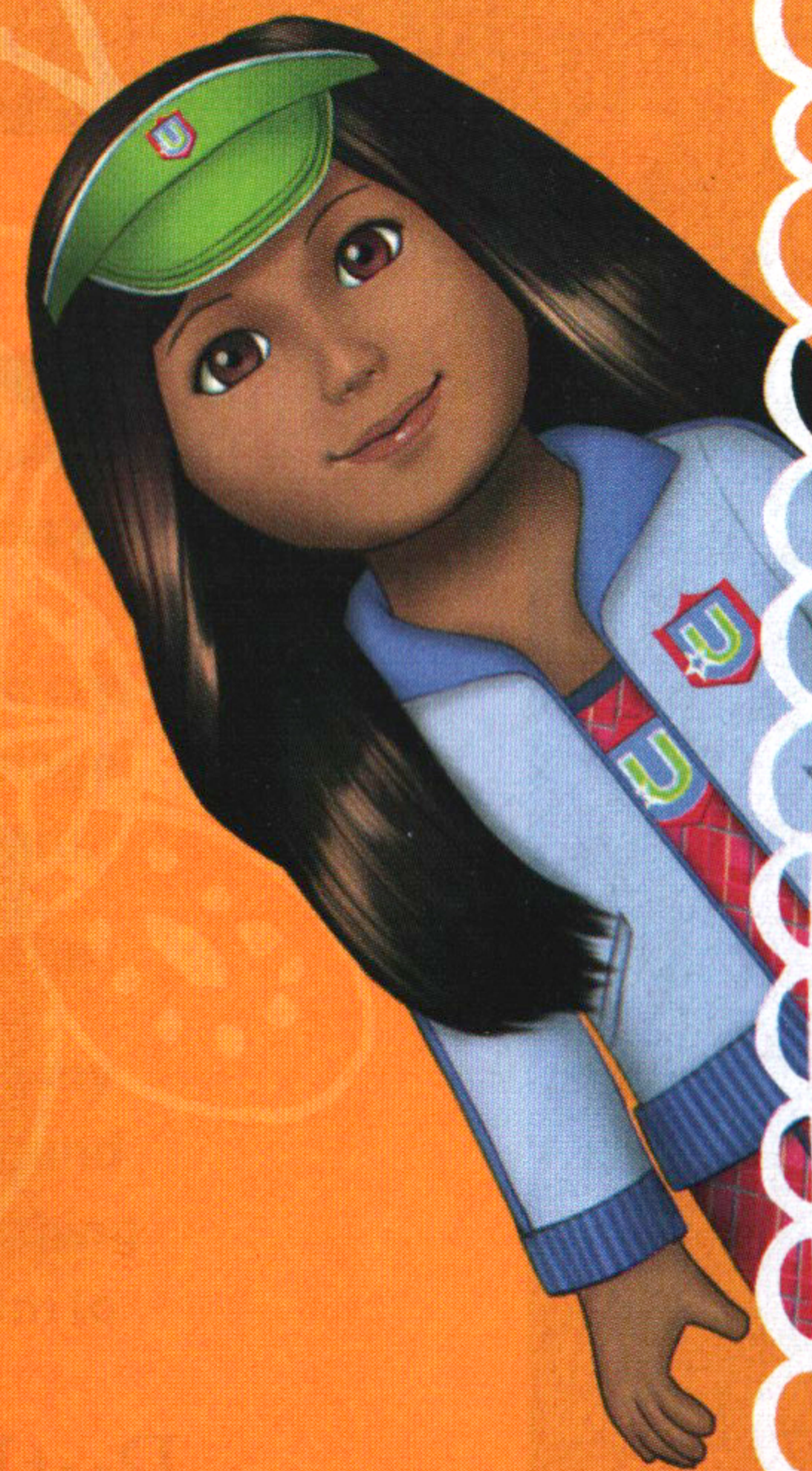
29. Which state is the largest in area?

- a. Alaska
- b. Texas
- c. Colorado
- d. Wyoming



30. In which sport do you *serve, set, and spike*?

- a. tennis
- b. softball
- c. volleyball
- d. gymnastics



Answers

1. a; 2. a; 3. c; 4. d; 5. d; 6. c; 7. b; 8. a; 9. d; 10. a;

11. b; 12. c; 13. d; 14. a; 15. a; 16. d; 17. a; 18. b; 19. a; 20. c;

21. a; 22. b; 23. c; 24. b; 25. c; 26. a; 27. b; 28. a; 29. a; 30. c

Below, write in the number of correct answers you had in each category. The categories with the highest totals are your expert subjects. Help desk, here you come! ★

Math



Animals



Geography



Language



Sports



ADVERTISEMENT

The quiz you just took is based on one of the free games available at American Girl's new virtual world, Innerstar University.

It's a **one-of-a-kind online place** where every girl can let her talents shine.

To learn more, you can visit InnerstarU.com.



Two Hearts for Haiti

Ruthie was adopted from Haiti. Raegan is Ruthie's closest friend, and when she learned of the earthquake that hit Ruthie's birth country, she knew right away that she wanted to help. Read as the Illinois girls interview each other about how their friendship inspires them, how the news from Haiti affected them, and how they want to change the world.

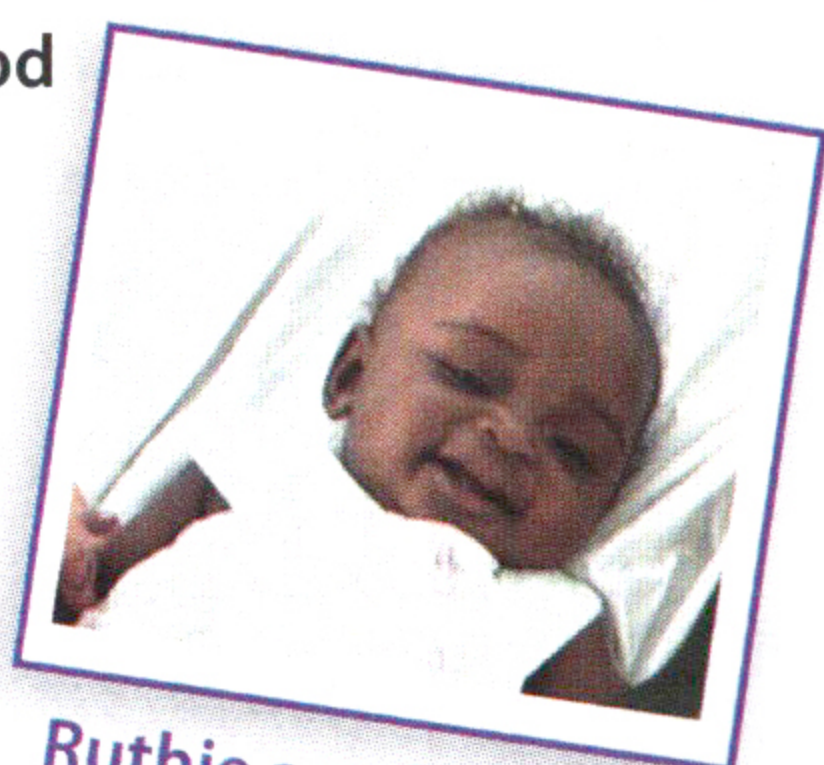


Ruthie

Raegan

Raegan: How old were you when you were adopted from Haiti?

Ruthie: I was just a tiny baby. I don't remember it. But I hear that the orphanage where I lived was nice, and the people there took good care of me and the other kids. More than 900 children and babies have been adopted from that orphanage—kids like me.



Ruthie as a baby

Raegan: Your life has turned out really good.

Ruthie: My life is just really great! I have a nice family who loves me very much—including my older brother Maki, who also was adopted from Haiti as a baby. We laugh a lot. We spend time together. We're just one big, happy family. Plus, I have the most awesomest friends ever—like you, you know.

Raegan: Well, I'm happy you came to live here! Remember how we met?

Ruthie: Yeah, we met in kindergarten. We were telling jokes. "Why did the cookie go to the doctor?"

Raegan: "Because he was feeling a little crumbly!" You started laughing, and then I started laughing, and we just started to play together. And we finally got to be in the same class last year, third grade. We laughed the whole day.

Ruthie: We tell the most hysterical jokes in the entire world.

Raegan: And I love to travel with you.

Ruthie: And play games.

Raegan: And do each other's hair, and find out new things. Sometimes it feels like you're my sister.

I know that Haiti is a part of you, so I was upset when I heard about the earthquake there earlier this year.

Ruthie: When I heard, I felt like I wanted to cry. I was worried about all the kids in the orphanage where I had lived—about all the people in Haiti, a lot of them kids like me.

Raegan: When I heard the news, it felt like my heart stopped for a second. I thought of you, and then I said to my mom, "We have to do something about this." That's when I got the idea to swim to help Haiti.

Ruthie: You told me that you wanted to swim laps and have people pledge money to Haiti if you reached your goal. I was like, *Wow, you really want to do this?* But I believe in my friends, and I had faith in you. I knew you could do it.

I was worried about all the kids in the orphanage where I had lived—about all the people in Haiti, a lot of them kids like me.

—Ruthie

Raegan: You know that when I was four, my house got hit by a tornado, and my family lost everything. It's not the same thing as what happened in Haiti, but I know that it's hard to lose your home—especially when you're a kid. The more I thought about the kids in Haiti, the more I felt, *I've got to do this*. I knew it would be tough to swim 150 laps—that's more than two miles, way more than I'd ever done before. But you inspired me to try my hardest. You said to me, "Raegan, just believe in yourself."

Ruthie: It worked!

Raegan: I called all the contacts in my mom's cell phone, and everyone said yes when I asked if they'd donate to my cause. No one said no. My goal was to raise \$3,500.

Ruthie: It was so much fun watching you the day you swam. Our whole class was there.

Raegan: There were so many people—even people I didn't know! But everyone was yelling and helping count the laps and waving posters. I had so much support from everybody. It took me an hour and 17 minutes to finish, and I was swimming faster at the end than when I started. When it was over, I was so tired—and feeling so great because I knew what it meant.

Ruthie: You raised a lot of money.

Raegan: It was like a miracle. We raised a lot more money than my original goal, and then a doctor in Florida who had heard about my swim offered to double the donations. We sent about

Kids have good ideas,
and they really can
make a difference.

—Raegan



\$70,000 to Haiti. It's buying food and fixing buildings. It's paying for medicine—lots of things.

Ruthie: That's going to help a lot of kids.

Raegan: It's going to make a big difference. We both care about that.

Ruthie: The Rae of Sunshine Club you started is going to help raise more money and do more good things. I'm glad I'm in it.

Raegan: It's fun going to the club meetings with you! I'm excited to try to start clubs in all our local schools. Kids have good ideas, and they really can make a difference. I want the club to help kids see how to do that—and to believe in one another.

Ruthie: The book drive we did at the end of the school year was great. So many kids in our area will have books to read at home now. And I'm excited about our next project, raising money to build a school at my orphanage in Haiti. I want it to be big and to have lots of teachers to help kids with math and reading and everything. A school will help kids be strong and healthy grown-ups who can do a lot of things. It'll help everyone.

Raegan: And besides, learning is actually really fun. Building a school in Haiti would be a dream come true.

Ruthie: When we get older, I want to go down there and do as much as I can to help out.

Raegan: We could teach at the school—if we learned a new language.

Ruthie: But we could do that. I know we could. We could do it together. ★



Raegan says, "The day of my swim, my whole class took a field trip to come watch me. It was so awesome to have them there—especially Ruthie. I felt very grateful and blessed."

Sparkle

SPECTACULAR

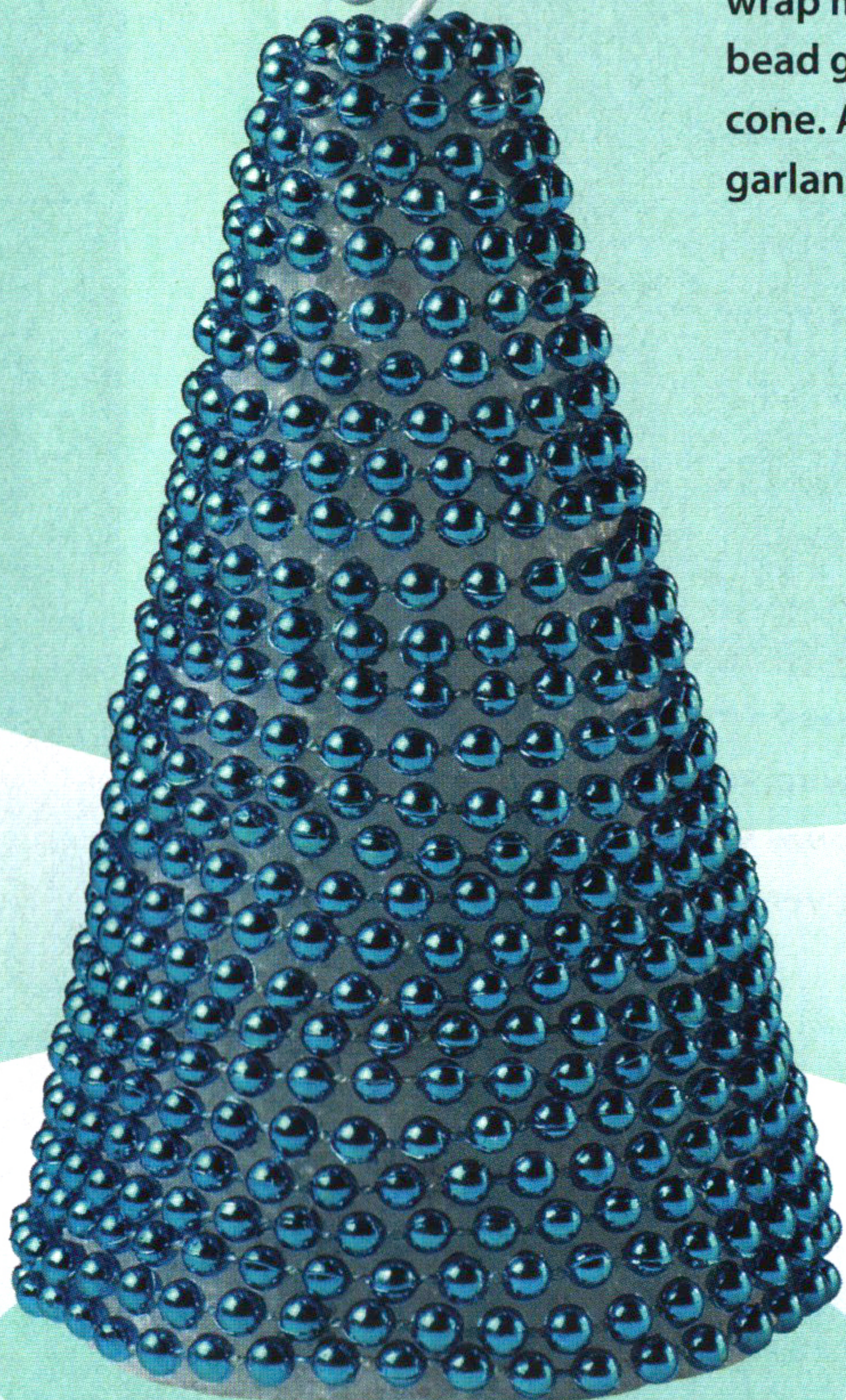


Twinkle Trees



Make a mini winter woodland scene. Begin by covering a small Styrofoam cone with Glue Lines. Then, starting at the bottom, tightly wrap metallic yarn or a mini bead garland around the cone. Attach the end of the garland to the top with a

Glue Dot. Ask an adult to straighten the end of a decorative paper clip (available at office supply stores) and push it into the tip of the cone. Use the paper clip as a photo holder. Make trees in various sizes for a forest of photos!



For a snowy look, cover a cone with craft glue. Then sprinkle the cone with beads, followed by white glitter.



Jingle-Bell Wreath

Dress up a door with a mini winter wreath.

1. Start with two 9-foot spools of $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch-wide ribbon. Cut the ribbon into 5-inch pieces. (Set aside three ribbon pieces to use later.)

2. Attach a piece of ribbon to a plastic bangle bracelet by tying it only once. Continue tying ribbon pieces around the bracelet

until it's covered. (Slide the ribbon knots together as you go.)

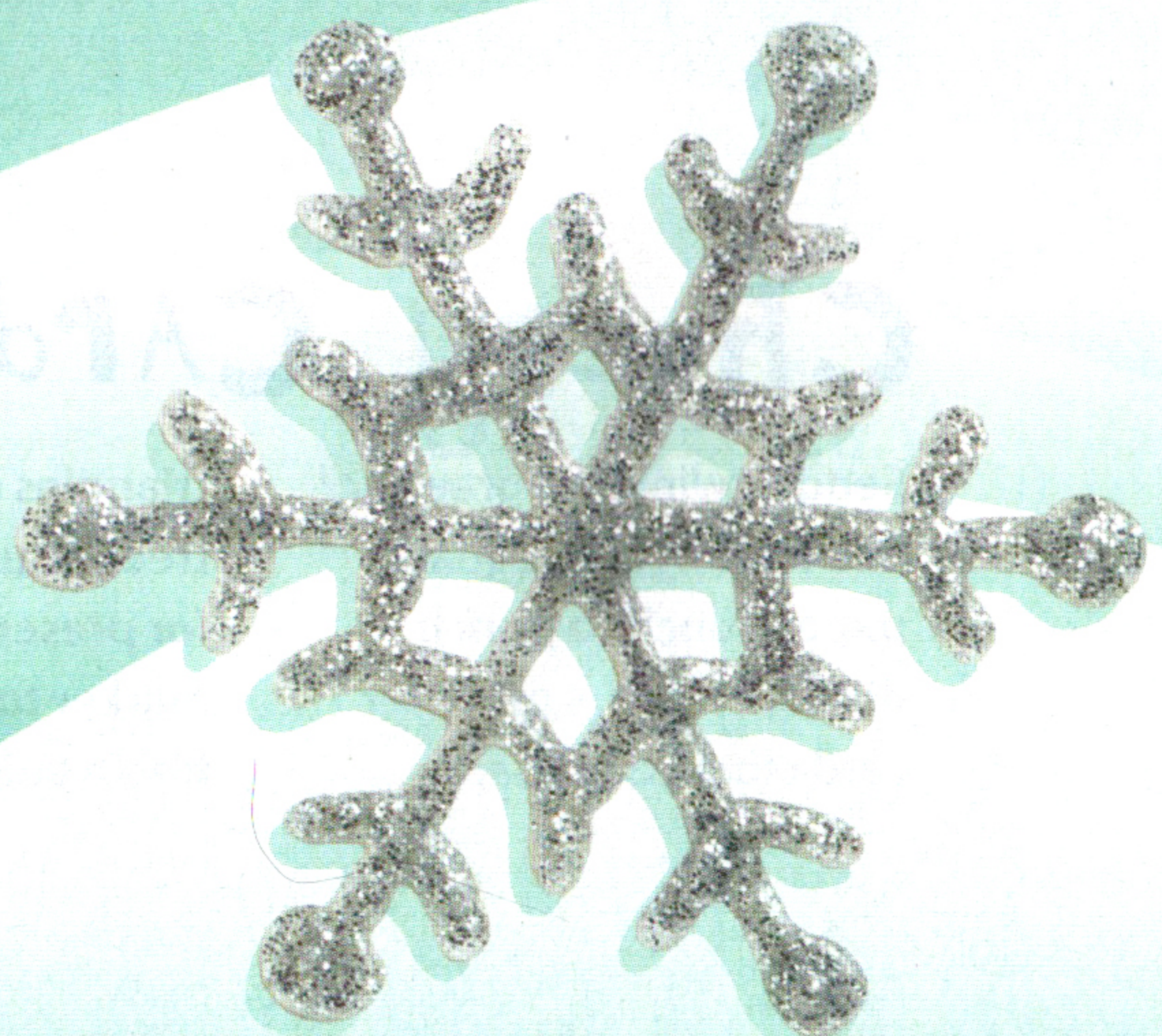
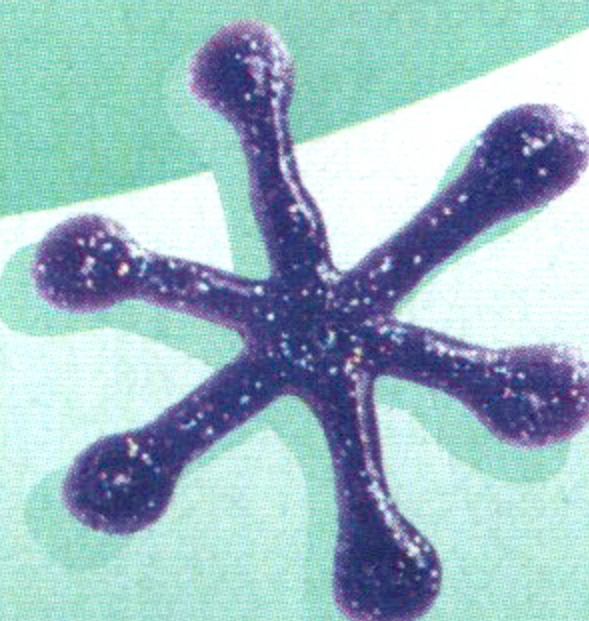
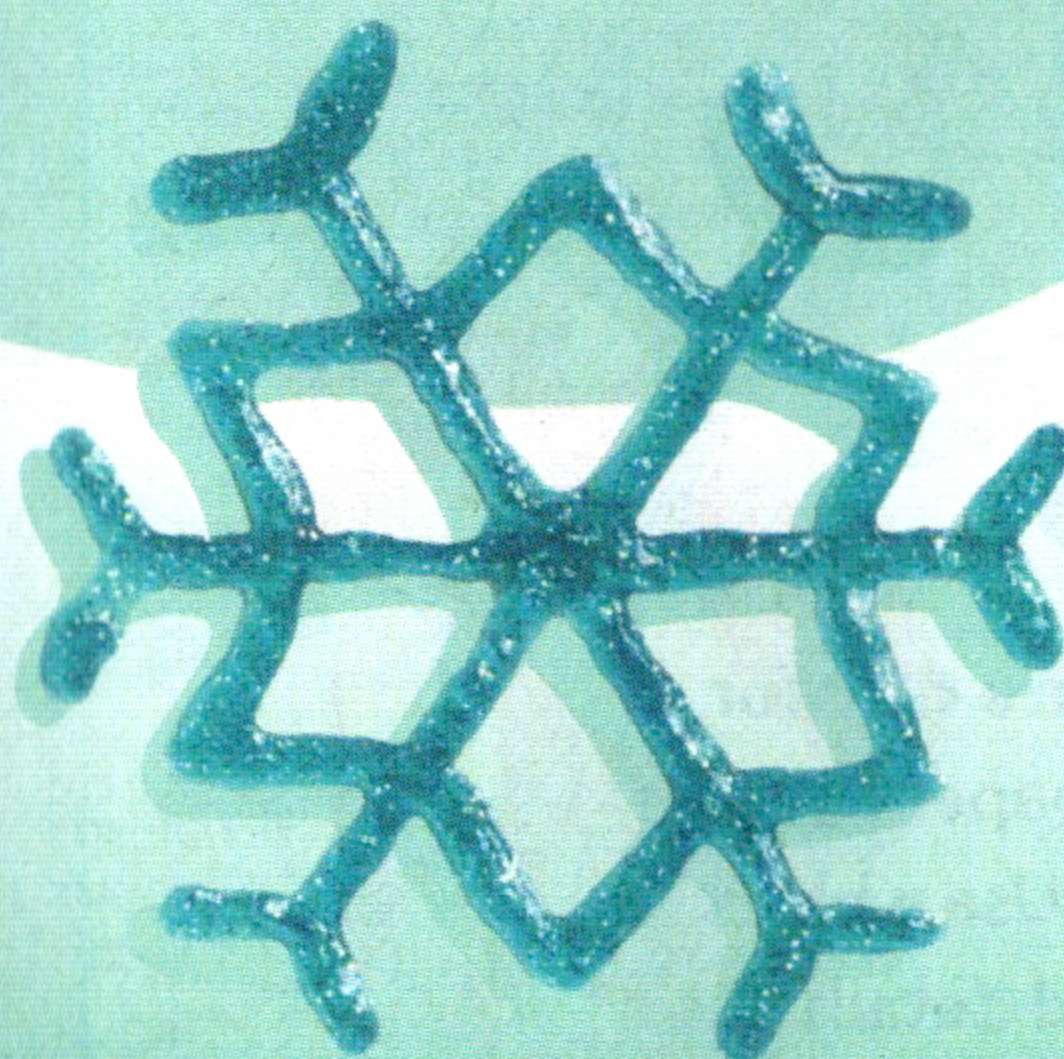
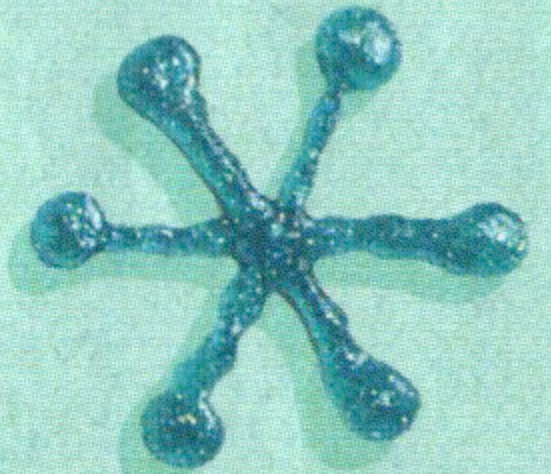
3. Thread a mini jingle bell on each of the three extra ribbons. Tie each piece onto the wreath. Hang the wreath on a doorknob for holiday cheer.



Fancy Flurries

Create your own swirling snowstorm. Use tubes of glitter fabric paint to draw snowflakes on wax paper. Let dry overnight. Carefully peel the snowflakes off the paper and stick them

to a window. (Make sure that the window is clean and dry first.) For pretty snowflake templates you can print and trace, click on "Start the fun" at americangirlmagazine.com.



Cookie-Cutter Clips

For each clip, trace a star-shaped cookie cutter onto a piece of glitter felt. Cut out the star shape using pinking shears. Using craft glue, attach the star to a piece of light-brown felt. Let dry. Cut the brown felt around the star shape

so that there's a narrow border around it. Glue beads onto the felt cookie for "sprinkles." Let dry. Attach the felt cookie to a clothespin with craft glue and let dry. Hang a ribbon and use the clips to display holiday cards.



Cherry Cards

Send a twinkling greeting! Use a triangle or square paper punch to punch different colors of glitter card stock. Glue paper

triangles onto a card for trees or use paper squares for presents. Use a black marker to add details like tree trunks and bows.



Use AG's Glittery Stickers to seal the envelopes!

Sparkling Snowballs



These snowballs are fun to make *and* eat.

1. Ask an adult to help you bake a white cake using one box of cake mix.
2. When the cake is cool, crumble it into a large bowl.
3. Add one can of vanilla frosting to the bowl and stir until the cake crumbs and frosting are mixed together. Place the mixture in the freezer for one hour.
4. Roll the cake dough into 1-inch balls and place on wax paper. Freeze overnight.
5. Ask an adult to help you melt 2 cups white chocolate chips in the microwave.
6. Using a spoon, carefully dip each ball into the melted white chocolate. (You can also leave the snowballs on the wax paper and drizzle the chocolate on top.) Place on the wax paper again. Before the coating hardens, decorate the snowballs with white sparkling sugar or sprinkles.

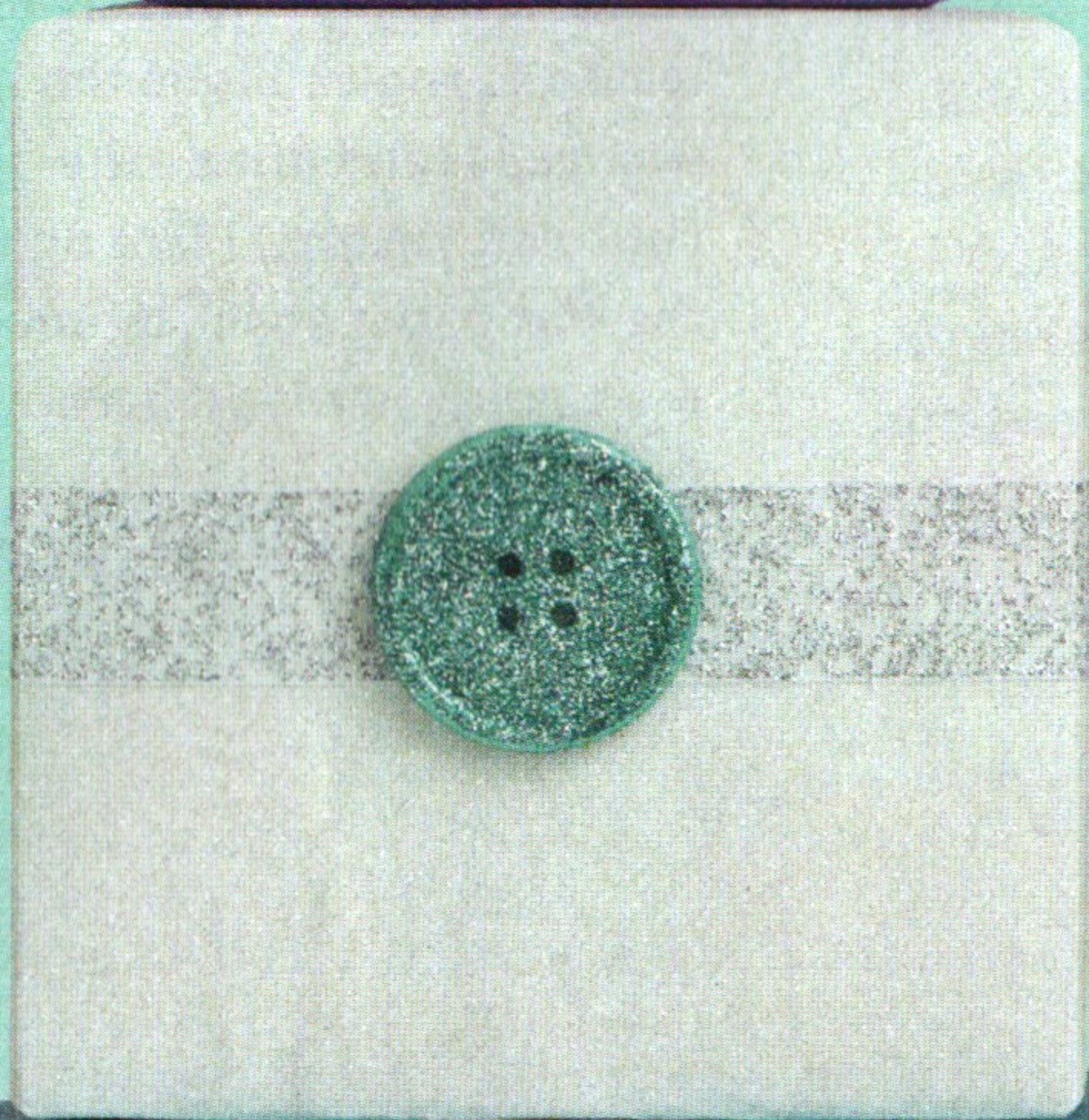


Jolly Rings

Ring in the holidays with this easy bead band! String enough jewel beads on a piece of elastic cord so

that it fits around your finger. Tie the cord in a knot to make the ring. Trim any leftover cord.





Pretty Presents

Give glittery gifts to your family and friends! Wrap presents in sparkly gift wrap and ribbon. Then add one of these decorations:

- **Sequined appliqué:** Available at craft stores.

- **Glitter button:** Cover a button with craft glue and sprinkle a layer of glitter. Let dry. Shake off excess glitter.
- **Fabric flowers:** Find these in the scrapbooking section of a craft store.

Snowy Scenes

Turn a plain frame into a winter scene. Choose a clear plastic frame that's larger than your photo. Cut a piece of scrapbook paper that's the same size as the frame. Attach the photo to the paper with double-stick

tape, and slide it inside the frame. Cut out a snowdrift shape from white glitter felt and attach it to the front of the frame with glue. Finish with sequins.



Dazzling Decorations



Here are three easy ways to make sparkly ornaments. Ask an adult to

remove the top of a clear ornament ball over a soft work surface. Then add:

Glitter

Using a funnel, add a small amount of glitter to the ball. Before replacing the top, put some poster putty in the opening so that the glitter won't spill out. Slowly turn the ball so that glitter coats the inside of the ornament.

Beads

Use a funnel to pour a mix of beads—micro-beads, bugle beads, seed beads—into the ornament ball.

Ribbon

Fill the ball with curled pieces of sparkly ribbon. ★



Be careful!

Ornaments are not toys. They're fragile and can have sharp edges.

NOW OPEN!

by Aubre Andrus

Take this quiz to see what kind of shop you should own.

1. If I'm bored, the first thing I do is...

- a. call my friends to see what they're up to.
- b. something active. I can't just sit on the couch!
- c. open my bead kit and make some pretty jewelry.
- d. play with my dog and teach her a new trick.



2. My favorite kind of computer game is...

- a. a game that lets me talk to other players in a virtual world.
- b. a competitive game that lets me race someone for the win.
- c. an artistic game that lets me design an outfit.
- d. a game that lets me care for virtual pets.

3. For fun, I like to...

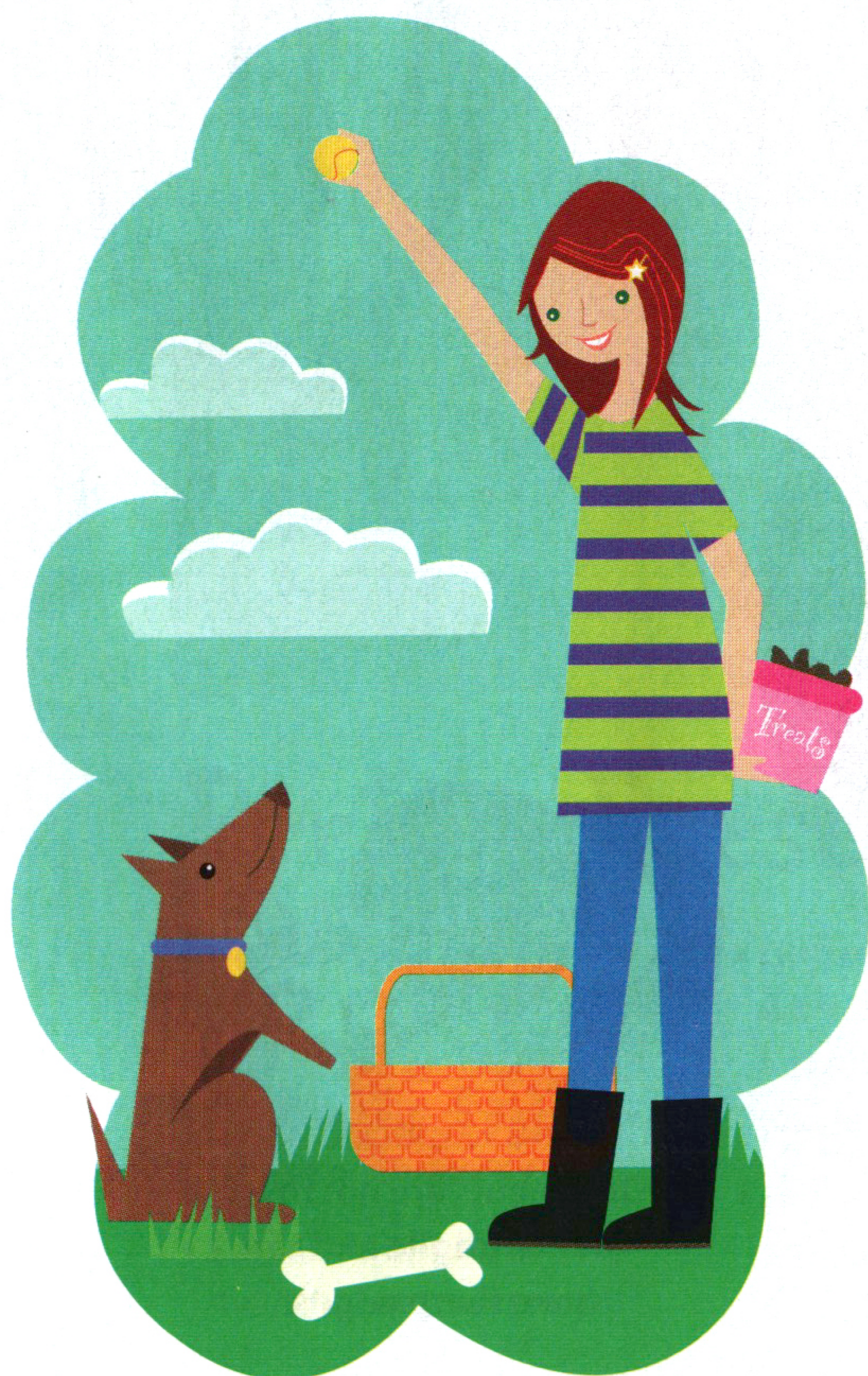
- a. plan a sleepover with my closest friends.
- b. round up the neighborhood kids for a game.
- c. glue photos and write memories in my scrapbook.
- d. take my dog for a walk to the park.

4. The best gift I could ever get would be...

- a. a group gift from my friends—they all chipped in!
- b. tickets to see my favorite sports team play.
- c. handmade. I love giving and receiving unique gifts.
- d. an adoption certificate for an endangered animal.

5. My favorite part of the school day is...

- a. lunch, because I love to laugh with all my friends.
- b. recess, because I love to play outside.
- c. art, because I love to express my creative side.
- d. science, because I love to learn about rain forests.



6. Right after school, I like to...

- a. call my friends and talk about everything that happened today.
- b. change my clothes and get ready for my sports practice.
- c. show my mom the page I designed for my journal.
- d. check on my pet and show her some love.

7. Before I go to bed, I...

- a. think about all the fun things I have to tell my friends on the bus.
- b. pack a duffle bag with all of my gear for the big game tomorrow.
- c. wash the glue and glitter off my hands.
- d. clear all the stuffed animals out of the way so that I can fit into my bed.

8. My favorite place in the world would be...

- a. at a party with all of my friends!
- b. an empty dance studio where I can practice as long as I want.
- c. a table with a blank piece of paper and a pile of art supplies.
- d. the zoo. I love to be surrounded by animals from all over the world.



9. My favorite season is...

- a. fall, because I get to see my friends when school starts!
- b. summer, because I love to run outside and play all day long.
- c. winter, because I stay cozy indoors and try new craft projects.
- d. spring, because the birds and critters come back out after winter.



10. My friends always tell me that I'm...

- a. super social.
- b. really athletic.
- c. so creative.
- d. very caring.

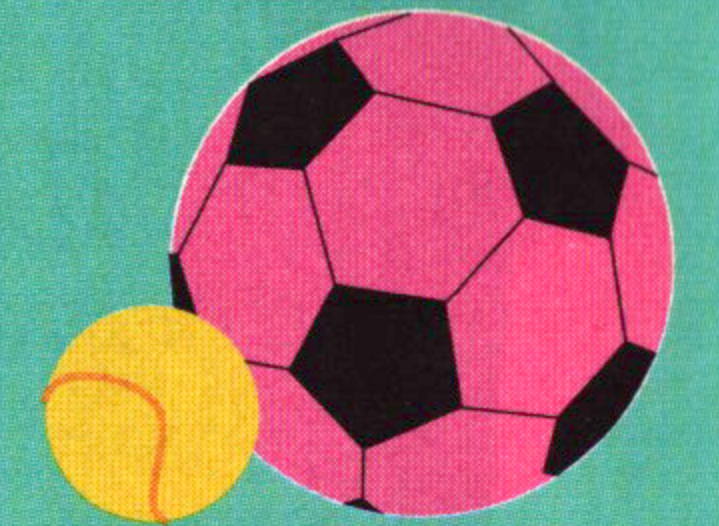
If you picked mostly a's, you'd open a



SMOOTHIE & JUICE BAR!

You're a social butterfly. You like to spend time with friends, and you know everything it takes to host and plan a great party. You'd be the perfect owner of Super Smoothies.

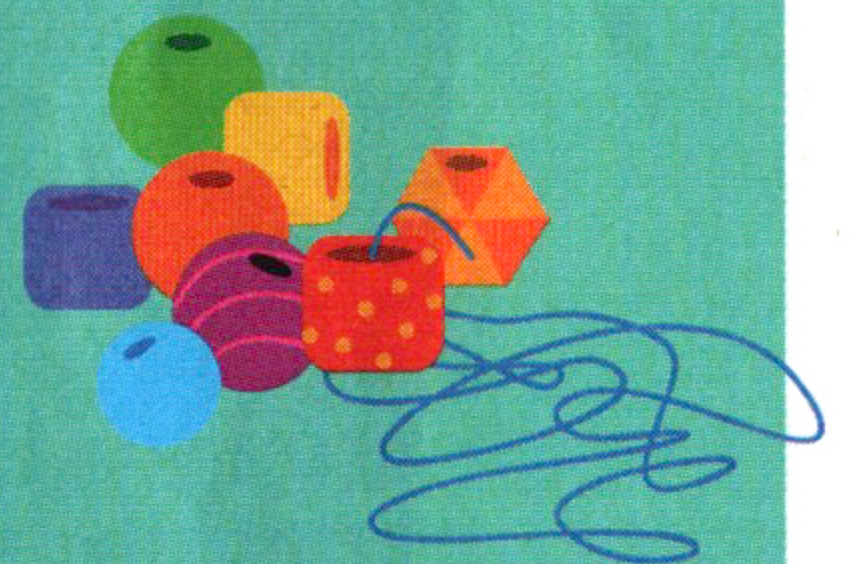
If you picked mostly b's, you'd open a



SPORTING GOODS STORE!

You're most happy when you're active. You love to play with a team or perfect your skills on your own. As an expert on all things sporty, you'd be the perfect owner of Team Spirit Sports.

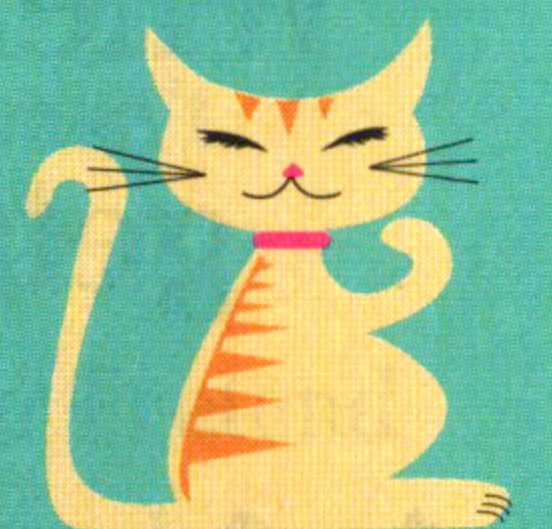
If you picked mostly C's, you'd open a



CRAFT & HOBBY STORE!

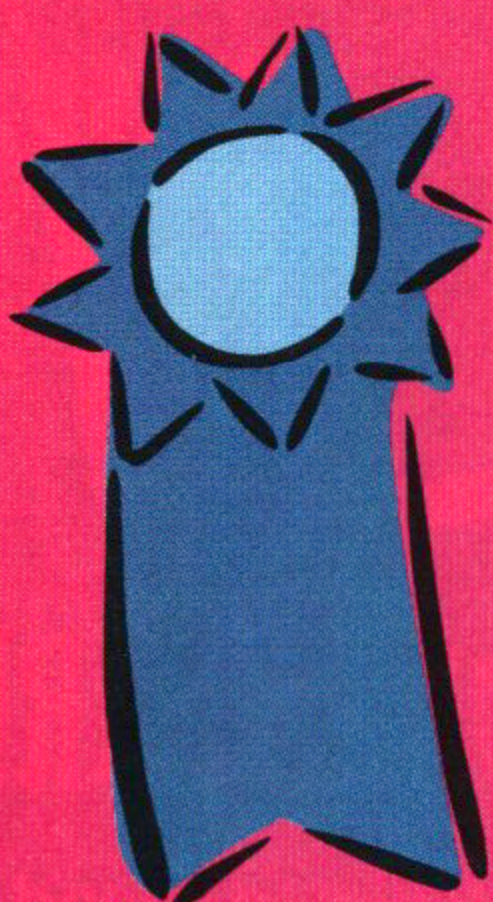
Creativity is your middle name! You love it all, from scrapbooking to doodling to making jewelry, which is why you'd be the perfect owner of the Crafty Girl Boutique!

If you picked mostly d's, you'd open a



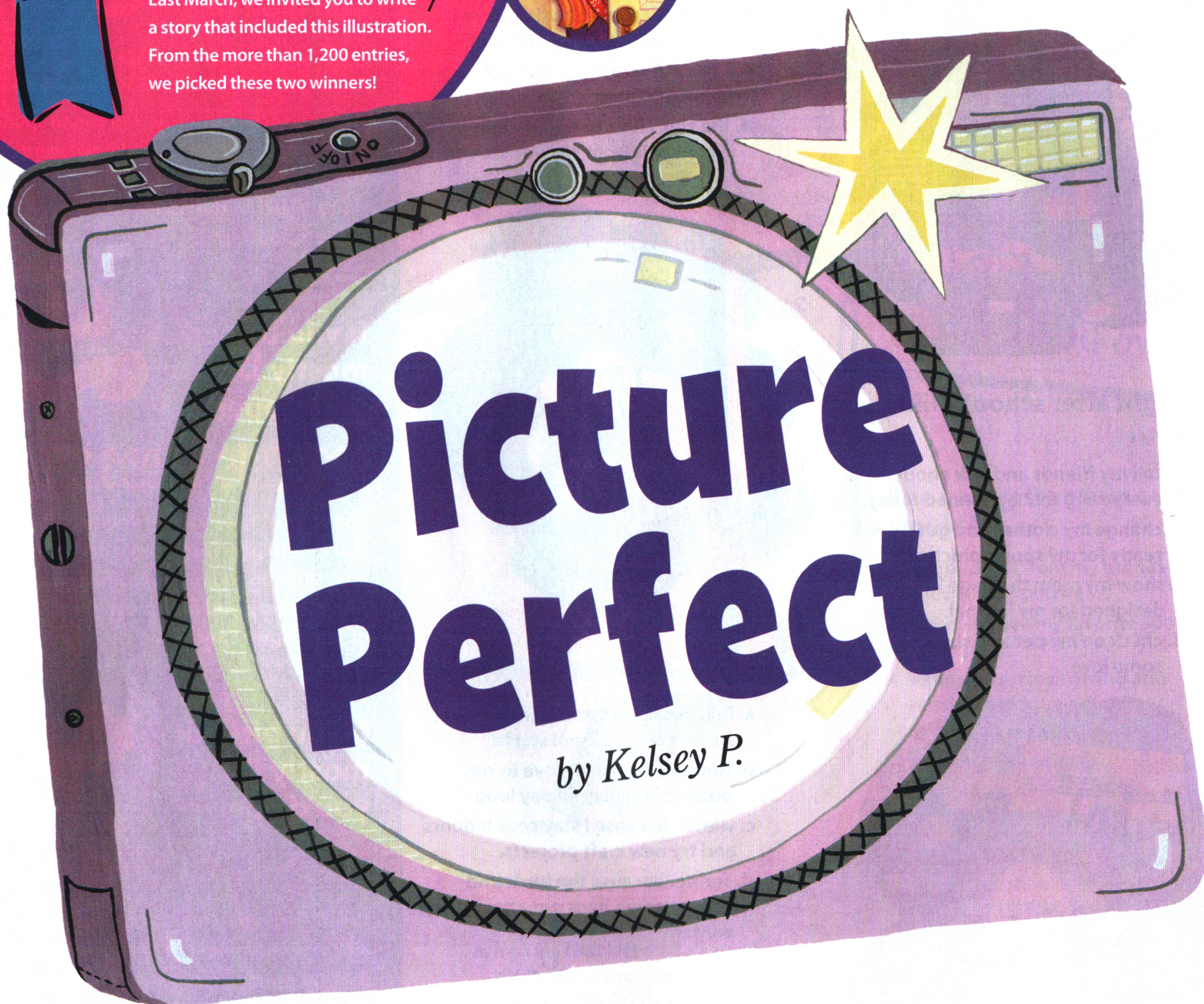
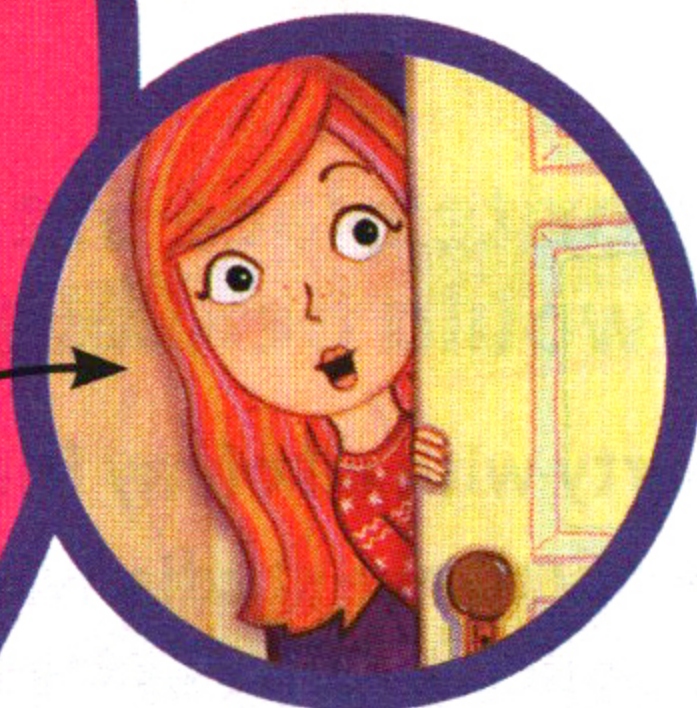
PET SUPPLIES STORE!

You love all creatures, and they love you, too! You want to learn everything there is to know about animals, which is why you'd be the perfect owner of the Pet Palace! ★



Fiction Contest Winners

Last March, we invited you to write a story that included this illustration. From the more than 1,200 entries, we picked these two winners!



When Stacy accidentally sees her present, her dream of getting a camera for Christmas disappears in a flash.

“It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas!” I sang loudly, struggling to get through the door with all of my shopping bags. I heard my mom’s laughter from the kitchen. I peeked in to see that she was busy making sugar cookies with my little sister,

Julia. Mom said, “Come in here, Stacy, and help us make some cookies!”

“I’ll be there in a bit. I need to wrap gifts first,” I replied.

I’d spent the day shopping for Christmas presents with my dad and couldn’t have been



happier with my purchases. I even got Dad's present, although I had to make sure he was busy looking at TVs before I bought it. Just in the nick of time, too! Christmas Eve was tomorrow, and, with the help of my babysitting money, I would finally be able to add to the stack of gifts under the tree. I hoped one of the packages already there held a camera.

It was the one thing I wanted. I had been dropping hints, some more obvious than others, and I was desperate for one. I love photography. My bedroom walls are covered with photographs cut from magazines and pictures I had taken with my mom's old camera. I am always trying to capture those perfect moments in which you can see the emotion, hear the laughter, or touch the gorgeous scene, but my photos have always seemed to fall short. I knew that if I had a new camera—a good one that could quickly snap photos with perfect details—I would finally be able to take some truly beautiful pictures. Usually I have to wait so long for the camera to flash that the smiles are obviously fake or the animal has long since run away.

I unloaded the shopping bags and then went on a hunt for wrapping paper. I knew Mom had put a few presents under the tree this morning, so I figured the first place to look was her room.

I turned the knob and stuck my head in—but

then quickly ducked out in horror. My Christmas present was lying unwrapped in the middle of the floor—and it wasn't a camera. A big pink cat with floppy ears was lounging next to the wrapping paper, and I knew Mom had definitely not gotten the hint.

For the past couple of years, I had been going through a phase of being obsessed with cats. I even collected them, although the stuffed animals and figurines now lay underneath my bed. Once I turned eleven, my feline passion faded away as photography took its place. Hadn't Mom noticed? Was I seriously getting a huge stuffed cat instead of a camera? I felt so disappointed.



Mom seemed to notice my sudden mood change, and during dinner, she tried to cheer me up. "Stacy, I got your Christmas present today. I'm so excited to surprise you!"

"I can't wait!" I said as enthusiastically as I could. Now I felt even guiltier for peeking, though it wasn't my fault. What would I do on Christmas morning? Pretend to be happy? Somehow, I found that impossible.

After dinner, I got some gift wrap from the basement and finished wrapping my gifts. *Well, at least everybody else is getting perfect presents from me*, I thought sadly as I arranged the bows so that the name cards would be visible.



When Mom came into my room to say goodnight, she grinned at me. “You are going to love your present,” she said.

“Are you sure?” I couldn’t help asking, but she just laughed.

“Believe me, yours is my favorite gift that I get to give.”

I tried to smile, but it was a good thing the lights were off because it was not convincing.

How could I pretend to be excited about the gift if

I couldn’t even grin

now? What would

Mom say if she

found out I’d seen

the gift and didn’t

like it?

I groaned and lay back down on my pillow.

The next day was even worse. Mom kept dropping hints about my “wonderful” gift, and

I dreaded Christmas morning. I couldn’t eat the turkey dinner, even though it’s my favorite meal. My parents kept asking if I was OK. I just laughed and reassured them, but on the inside, I felt awful.

After spending a miserable half hour singing Christmas carols, I couldn’t wait any longer—I needed to tell someone.

“Mom, may I talk to you for a second? Up in my room?”

She looked up from the plate she was helping Julia set out for Santa, her eyes filled with worry.

“Sure, honey, I’ll be up in a minute.”

While I waited, I tried to think of how to explain my feelings of guilt and disappointment to her, but no words came to mind. I would just have to wing it.

The door creaked open, and Mom sat down on the edge of my bed, looking concerned.

“What do you need to talk about?” she asked.

And so it came gushing out—how bad I felt about ruining the surprise, how upset I was that

I was getting a stuffed cat, and

how worried I was that

she would be mad.

Her reaction was nothing I expected—laughter.

“Stacy, that present is for Julia! How could you think I’d get something like that for you?”

“Then what am I getting?” I asked, relieved to have it over with and pleased that I wasn’t actually getting the cat.

She just smiled.

“You’ll have to wait and see. But sweetheart, I am glad you told me. I always want to know how you feel.”

“Thanks, Mom,” I whispered, and she closed the door.

“Stacy, wake up!” Julia yelled, shaking me. I sprang out of bed enthusiastically. I happily bounded into the living room and sat down next to the tree. I pulled out the box with my name on it and tore open the wrapping paper to find...





My camera! I had gotten a camera! I smiled at Mom and Dad and gave them the biggest hugs I could.

"Thank you," I said to both of them.

Dad picked up the camera and took a picture of Mom, Julia, and me, grinning. "Couldn't resist!" he said. It has become one of my favorite pictures.

Just as on that Christmas morning, I've learned

that some moments just beg to be captured.

I've taken lots of photos with my camera—my little sister laughing, my dad making a goofy face, my mom giving me a soft smile—and all of these photos have come to symbolize one thing for me: love. ★

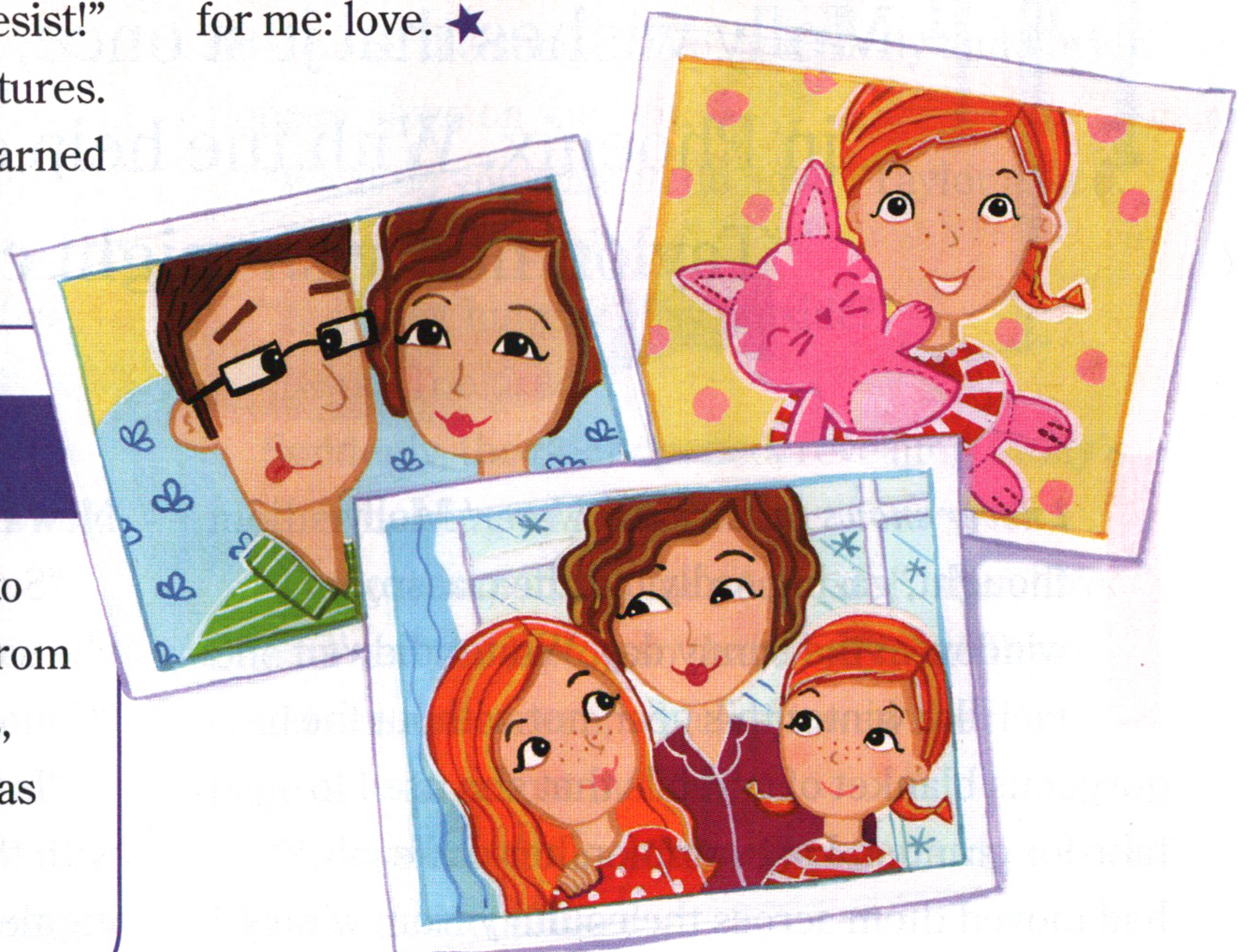
Meet the Author



Kelsey, age 14,
lives in Michigan.

Kelsey P.

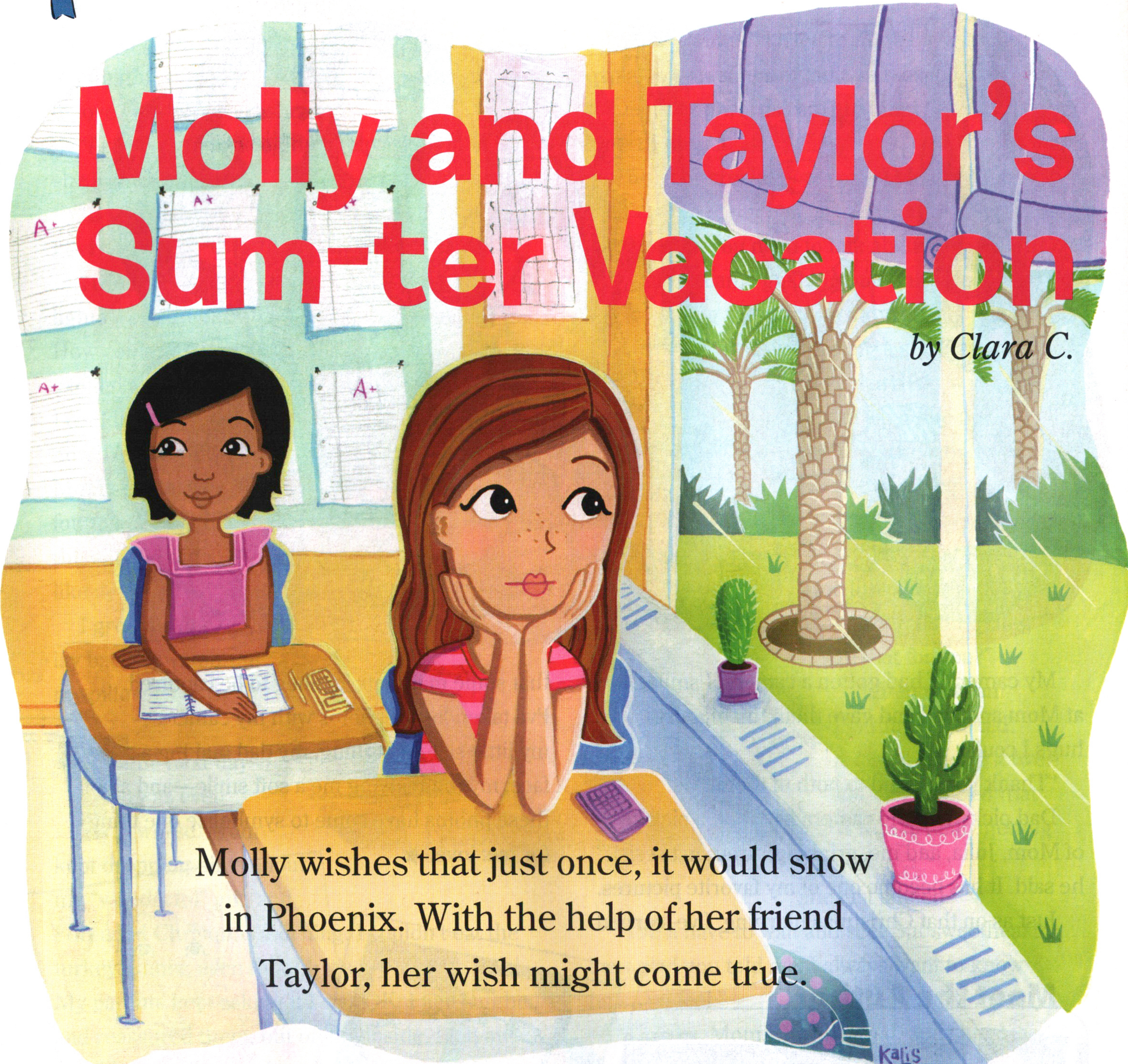
When I write stories, I like to base them on experiences from my own life. One Christmas, I accidentally found my present while I was looking for wrapping paper. But unlike Stacy, I was really excited about the gift!





Molly and Taylor's Sum-ter Vacation

by Clara C.



Molly wishes that just once, it would snow in Phoenix. With the help of her friend Taylor, her wish might come true.

It never snows in Phoenix. Never! Molly thought, gazing sadly out the classroom window at the sunny day. Winter didn't feel like winter this year, not without the gorgeous blanket of crystals that she used to take for granted. Last summer, her dad's job had moved them across the country from wintry

New England to the deserts of Arizona.

"Sun, sun, go away; come again another day," she sang softly, willing a cloud or two to roll in. "C'mon, all I'm asking for is one little snowflake—"

"Is there something you would like to share with the class, Molly?" Mr. Dawson asked. Fits of giggles rang out from the class. Molly blushed and



sank in her seat. She had totally forgotten she was in math class.

"She was just asking me if she could borrow my calculator since hers is broken, Mr. Dawson," a voice piped up. Her friend Taylor was coming to Molly's rescue.

"Sure," he said, sounding skeptical. "Now, back to multiplication..." Mr. Dawson said as he turned to the blackboard. Molly sighed with relief.

"Thanks," she whispered to Taylor out of the corner of her mouth.

"No problem," Taylor murmured back, a gleam of suppressed laughter in her eyes.

Thankfully, the last few minutes of class passed quickly, and the bell rang. Molly tossed her books into her bag while Taylor waited at the door.

"Don't say it!" Molly said, falling into step next to her friend.

"Sun, sun, go away, come again another day," Taylor teased.

"I was daydreaming!" Molly exclaimed.

"Oh, really? I hadn't noticed," Taylor giggled.

"What's our homework?" Molly asked.

"Nothing. Today was our last day. It's winter vacation, remember?" Taylor replied.

"You mean sum-ter vacation?" Molly said, and they both laughed. The girls had decided to rename the break to be a combination of the words *summer* and *winter*, since Molly couldn't call it winter vacation without snow, so it had become "sum-ter vacation."

"Are you still coming over after school?" Molly asked enthusiastically.

"Of course! I can't wait for our sleepover!" gushed Taylor.

"Hey, Molly?" Taylor giggled.

"What?"

"Last one to your house is a melted snowman!"



Taylor shouted over her shoulder, taking off down the sidewalk.

"Hey, no fair! You got a head start!"

Hours later, the girls were in Molly's room, dancing around, rocking out to their favorite song.

"La-la-la-la!" they sang obnoxiously. Much to the relief of everyone in the house, the song ended, and Molly and Taylor flopped down on the bed.

"What do you want to do now?" Taylor asked.

"Don't know. Eat?"

"Nah. Not hungry. Play outside?"

"Nope. Too tired."

Suddenly, the door opened, revealing Molly's mother holding a laptop.

"I've got something for you to do!" she chirped. She turned the laptop so that Molly and Taylor could see the screen, which showed the home page of a ski resort in Utah.

"You want us to look at pictures of a ski resort?" Molly asked, confused.

"No, I want you to get excited. We're spending your break in the mountains! You'll finally get your snow, Molly."

"That's awesome!" Molly squealed, turning to Taylor to do their happy dance. But Taylor wasn't dancing or squealing. Molly frowned. "What's wrong?" she asked.

"Well, it's great for you," she said sadly, "but what am I going to do?"

Then Molly's mom said, "Actually, Taylor, I spoke with your mom, and she said that your family would love to join us."

"That's awesome!" Taylor exclaimed. "When do we leave? What do I pack?" she asked.

"Calm down," Molly's mom laughed. "We're leaving in a few days. As for packing, you and Molly are going shopping."

“What do you think of this?" Molly asked, pulling a pink ski jacket off a rack at the mall. Taylor's mom

looked over her shoulder and smiled as she sifted through a bin of scarves.

"I don't know. I liked the green one we saw yesterday better," said Taylor.

"Yeah, me too, but this one is warmer."

"Well, let's keep looking," Taylor offered. "There's bound to be something as cute as the green one and as warm as that one in here somewh—"

Molly's phone rang, cutting Taylor off.

"Sorry. It's my mom," she told Taylor, lifting the phone to her ear. "Hello?"



"Hi, sweetheart. I've got some bad news," the sympathetic voice of her mother cooed.

"What's going on?"

"I've got some bad news," the sympathetic voice of her mother cooed.

"The airport will be closed tomorrow because of bad weather. All flights have been canceled. I'm afraid that the trip is not going to work out."

Molly bit her lip, holding back tears.

"Oh. OK."

"Honey, I'm sorry. I know how much you were looking forward—"

"No, it's OK. I'll see you at home." She shoved the phone back into her pocket and put the coat on the rack.

"What's wrong?" Taylor asked.

"The trip's not happening," Molly replied softly.

"But why?"

"The airport's closed. Bad weather," Molly explained quickly. "Let's ask your mom to take us home."

"Yeah," Taylor sniffed. "OK."

The next morning, Molly woke up still feeling gloomy about the canceled ski trip. She sighed as she saw the sun pouring in through her bedroom window. "Yet another sunny day," she said bitterly.



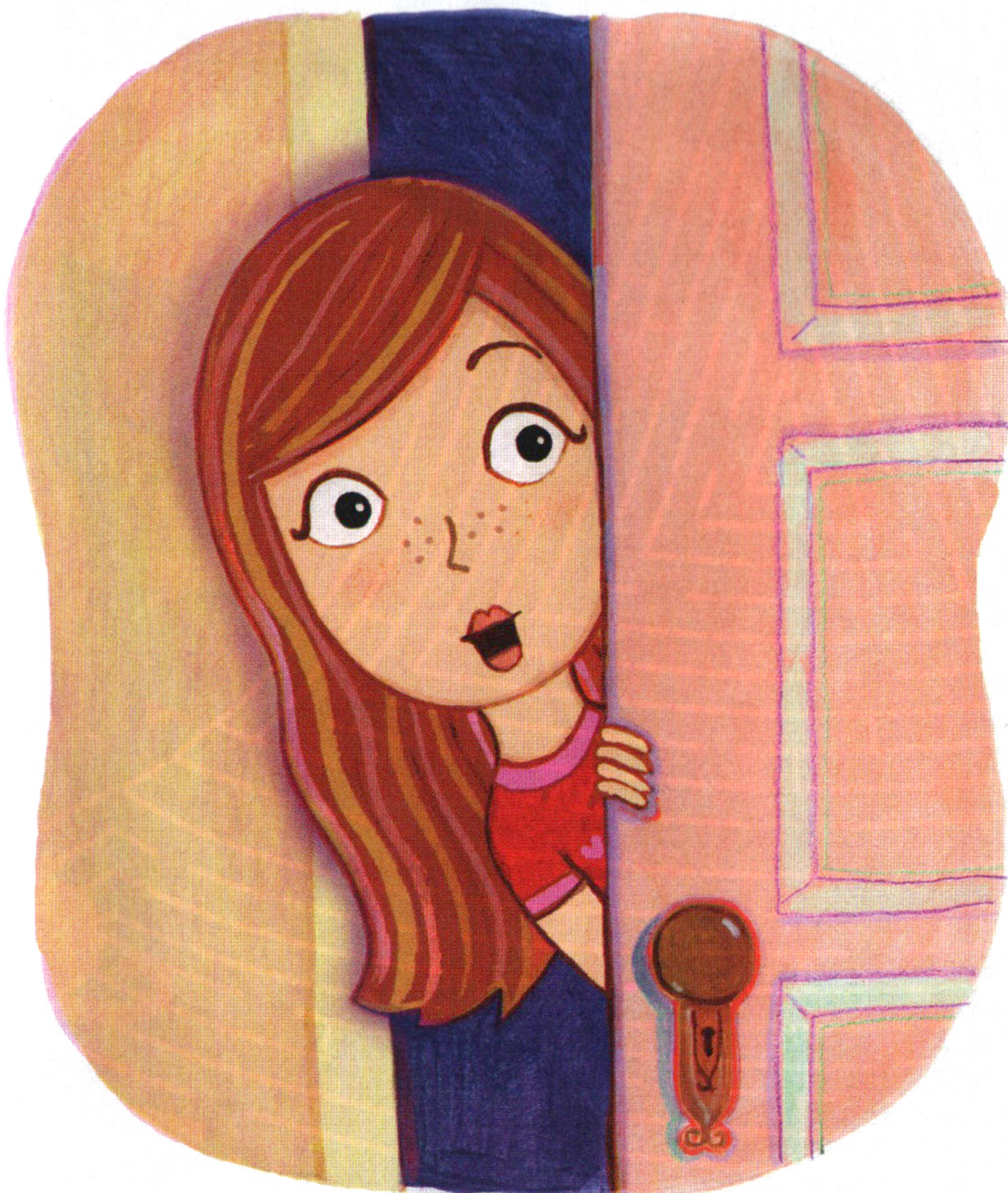
Slowly, she walked down the stairs, and thought, *I would give anything to be on my way to that ski lodge right now.*

She went around the corner to go into the living room. The door was closed. She thought, *That's strange.*

She turned the knob and opened the door. Then Molly gasped. She couldn't believe her eyes.

Molly was greeted with a beautiful winter scene. White snowflakes and green pine trees cut from construction paper covered the living-room walls. Snowflakes hung from the ceiling, too. An orange paper fire burned in a cardboard-box fireplace, and warm blankets and pillows covered the couches. And above the fireplace was a sign that said, "Welcome to the Sum-ter Ski Lodge."

As Molly surveyed the wintry setting, she suddenly noticed Taylor standing in a corner of the room, a roll of tape in her hands and a big smile on her face.



"I worked on it for the entire morning, with a little help from your mom and dad," she said. "What do you think?"

Molly threw her arms around Taylor and exclaimed, "I love it!"

Taylor replied, "I know it's not the same as the real ski lodge—"

"No, it's not," Molly interrupted. "It's better!"

The girls collapsed onto a heap of pillows on the couch, and Molly's mom brought them two steaming cups of hot cocoa.

As they clinked their mugs together, Taylor said, "Happy sum-ter vacation, Molly!"

"Happy sum-ter vacation, Taylor," Molly said with the biggest smile she'd had on her face since she'd moved to Arizona. ★



Meet the Author



Clara, age 14,
lives in Ohio.

Clara C.

Writing is my life! I'm in a writing club, and I always create stories about Taylor and Molly. This may sound funny, but I come up with my best stories while jumping on my trampoline!

Honorable Mentions

Rachel P.
Age 10, New Mexico

Mary Rose B.
Age 13, California

Ellie F.
Age 8, Michigan

Gabriela S.
Age 11, Ohio

Gracie M.
Age 11, Wisconsin

Andrea L.
Age 13, Ohio

Puzzle Palooza

Totally A-maze-ing!

Find your way through these two mazes!



Star Search

Look at the pattern of the stars on the first wreath. Follow the wreaths with the same pattern to reach the end of the maze.



This puzzle idea was submitted by this issue's Puzzle Pal, Abigail H., age 10, North Carolina.

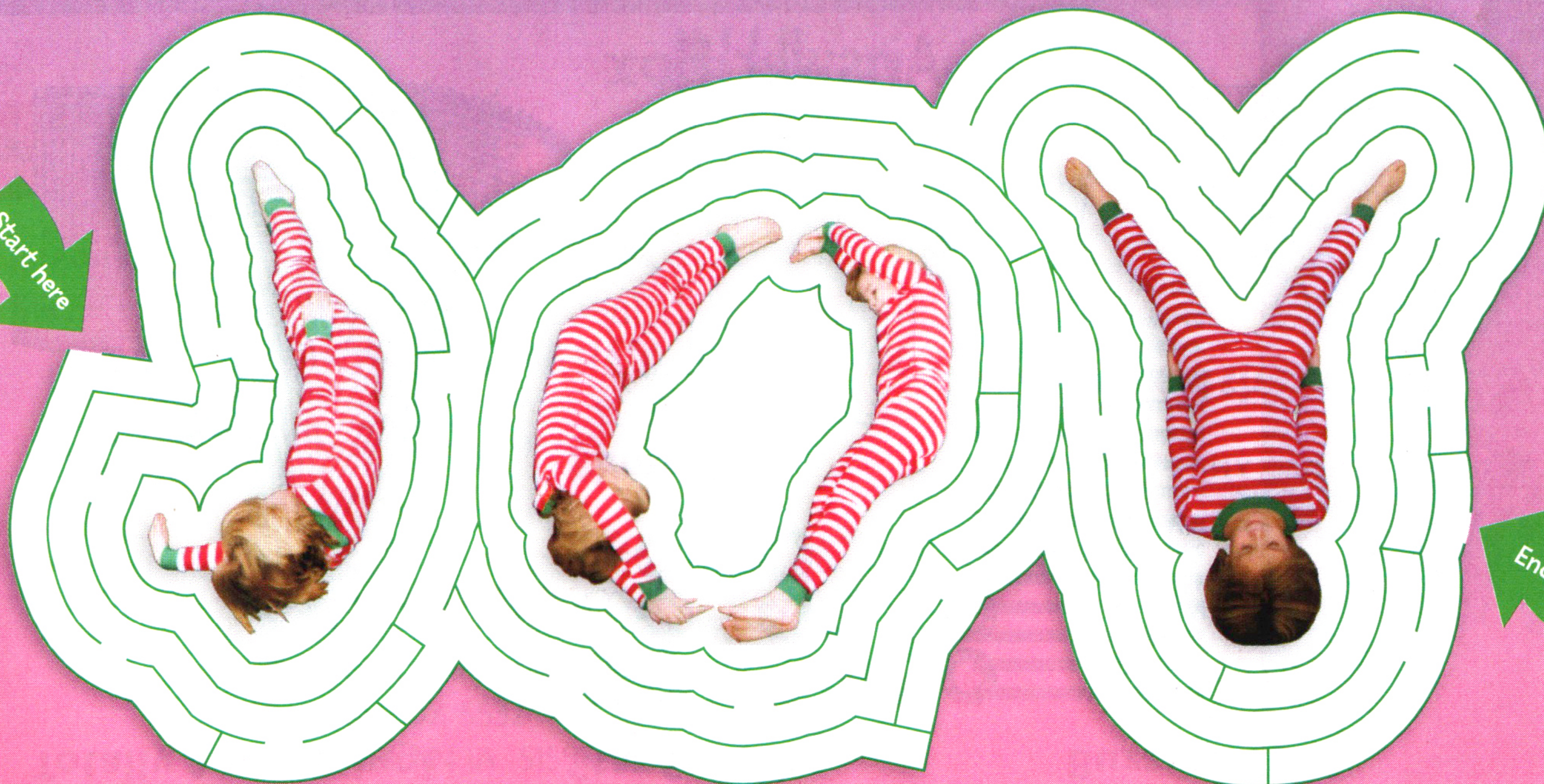


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Want to be an AG Puzzle Pal? Send puzzles, secret codes, or brainteasers created by YOU to the address on page 7.

Photo Fun

Katie S., age 10, from Illinois, formed the word "joy" while wearing festive holiday pajamas! See if you can finish this "joyful" maze.



Start here

End here

This issue's Buzzword is... **mazy**

How to say it: **MAY-zee**

What it means: **resembling a maze; winding; twisting**

In this word-search maze, follow the route that spells the word *mazy* correctly each time to reach the end of the maze.

One way to use it: **While Sarah and her brother and sister were caroling through their neighborhood, they walked along the mazy sidewalks.**

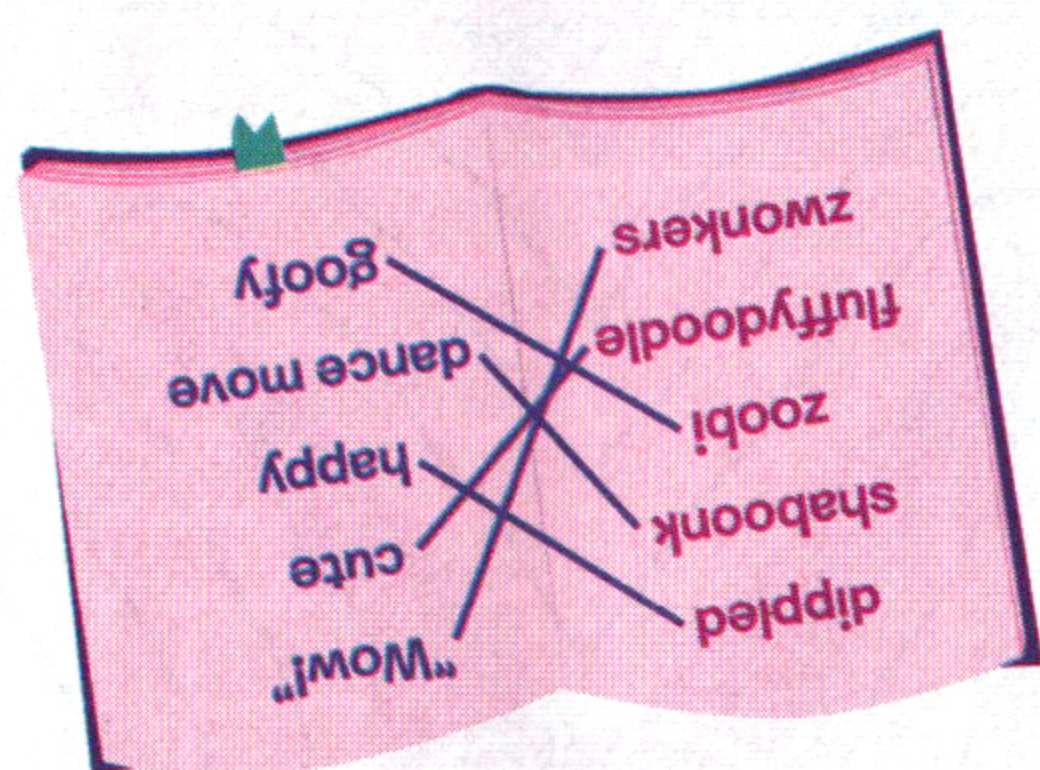


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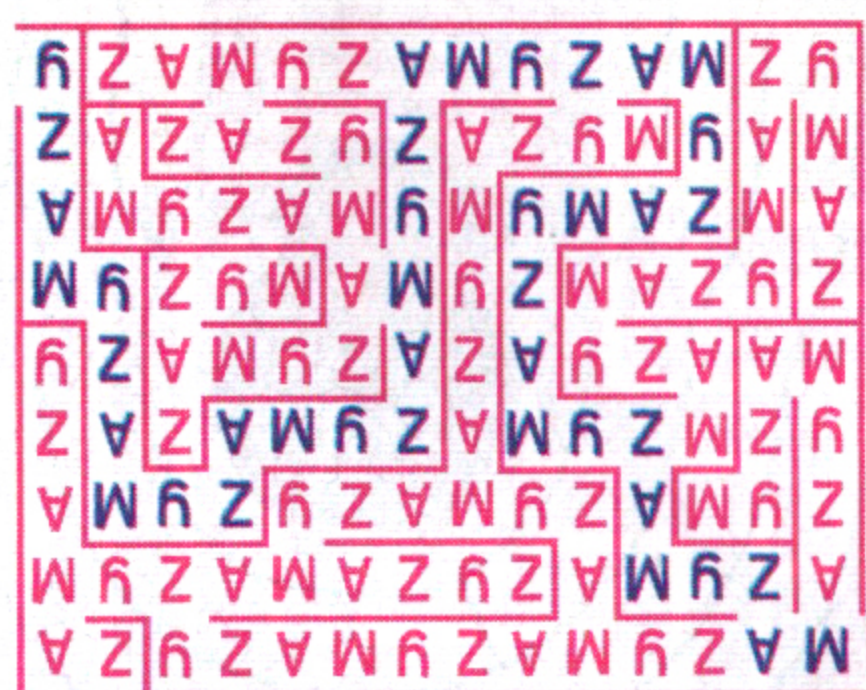


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Answer Box



Behind the Scenes



Buzzword

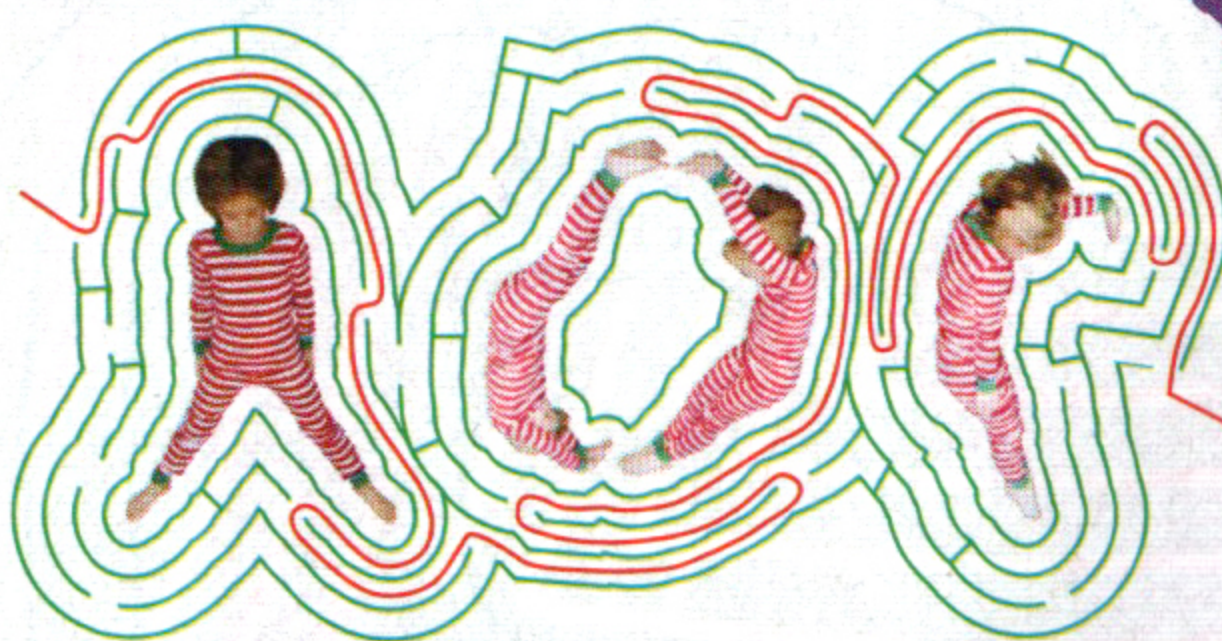


Photo Fun



Star Search



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Let it snow!

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SWEET
holiday!



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HELP!

Dear American Girl,

My hair is so thin. My cousin has really thick hair, and I love the way it looks. Is there any way for me to get thick hair?

Thin hair

No matter what the exciting ads for hair products say, the truth is that you get the hair you're born with. Look for pictures of people whose hair is like yours, and copy their cool styles. Whether you've got curly hair you wish were straight or thin hair you wish were thick, try learning to love what you've got. When you do that, you'll look your best.

Dear American Girl,

My handwriting is the worst in my class! On reports, I always lose points for it. But I don't know how to get any better.

Handwriting Help!

First, talk to your parents. They can work with your teacher or your doctor on a plan to help you improve your writing. Also, some fun and artsy activities might help. Draw pictures, color carefully in a coloring book, or practice painting your toenails, if that's OK with a parent. Getting good at any of those activities might help you to control a pen or pencil better, too.



Dear American Girl,

My mom wants me to be in the Christmas play. But I was in it last year, and I messed up BIG TIME. I can't try again, right?

Nervous

Sure you can. Just because you messed up last year doesn't mean that it'll happen again this time. You might be nervous when you take the stage again, but beating that fear will make you braver and stronger. Once you're cast in a role, practice like crazy—after all, the more prepared you are, the more confident you're bound to feel. Break a leg!



Dear American Girl,

I get an allowance, but my mom always forgets to give it to me. Now she owes me a lot of money! What should I do?

No \$

Talk to your mom. Tell her that if her budget allows it, you'd like to get all of your allowance so that you're caught up. Then work out a way to keep this from happening again. You might be able to write a reminder on the calendar, or else she could give you your allowance at the beginning of every month instead of every week. You should be able to find a solution together.



MORE HELP!

Dear American Girl,

I am happy and healthy and big. My family and I have always joked about my weight, but lately, it's not funny anymore. How can I stop the jokes?

Can't take a Joke?

Making comments about other people's bodies is just plain wrong. The next time someone makes a comment or calls you a joking name, say, "Please don't call me that. It's not funny to me. It's hurtful." If your family doesn't get the message the first time, keep sticking up for yourself. Because you're great just the way you are, and it's great that you know it.



Dear American Girl,

I know I'm supposed to use my knife to push food onto my fork—but I always forget and use my fingers instead! How can I break that bad habit?

No Fingers

Easy—put a glove on the hand you'd use to touch your food! But if you want a trick that is less noticeable, place your knife on the edge

of your plate at the start of the meal and tuck your non-fork hand under your leg, untucking it only to use your knife. Those two actions together should help you remember your knife. Kudos to you for wanting to work on your manners.



Dear American Girl,

My sister and I share a room. I am a neat freak, and she's not. She's messy and doesn't care!

Neat Freak

You and your sister will have to compromise. Ask your parents to



sit down with you two to help work out a deal. One idea you all could discuss would be setting up a small just-me space for each sister where the other sister isn't allowed. If each of you feels as if you have someplace that's only yours, it might help bring some peace.



Dear American Girl,

I love soccer, art, dance, vocal music, violin, and more. But it means that I have an activity every day! Sometimes I wish I didn't like so many things so that I'd have time to rest.

Very Busy

The thing is, you won't love any of your activities if you're too tired to enjoy them. Ask a parent to help you look for ways to slow down a bit. You could skip soccer for one season. Or drop your art class and create art at home only when you feel like it. You probably will feel better with a little more time to relax. And don't worry—you're just making choices for right now, not giving up those hobbies forever.



even
MORE HELP!

Dear American Girl,

My godmother just invited me to visit her in Canada! I was so excited—until I found out the flight would be almost four hours. I'd be by myself on the plane, and I'm kind of scared. Help!

Sure, flying alone can make a girl nervous. But the flight attendants will know that your parents aren't with you, so you'll have adults to call on if you need them. To stay busy during the flight, bring books or a movie player. You also could just gaze out the window. Find cool shapes in the clouds, or imagine that you live in a cloud colony with your most-fun friends. You'll be with your godmother in no time.

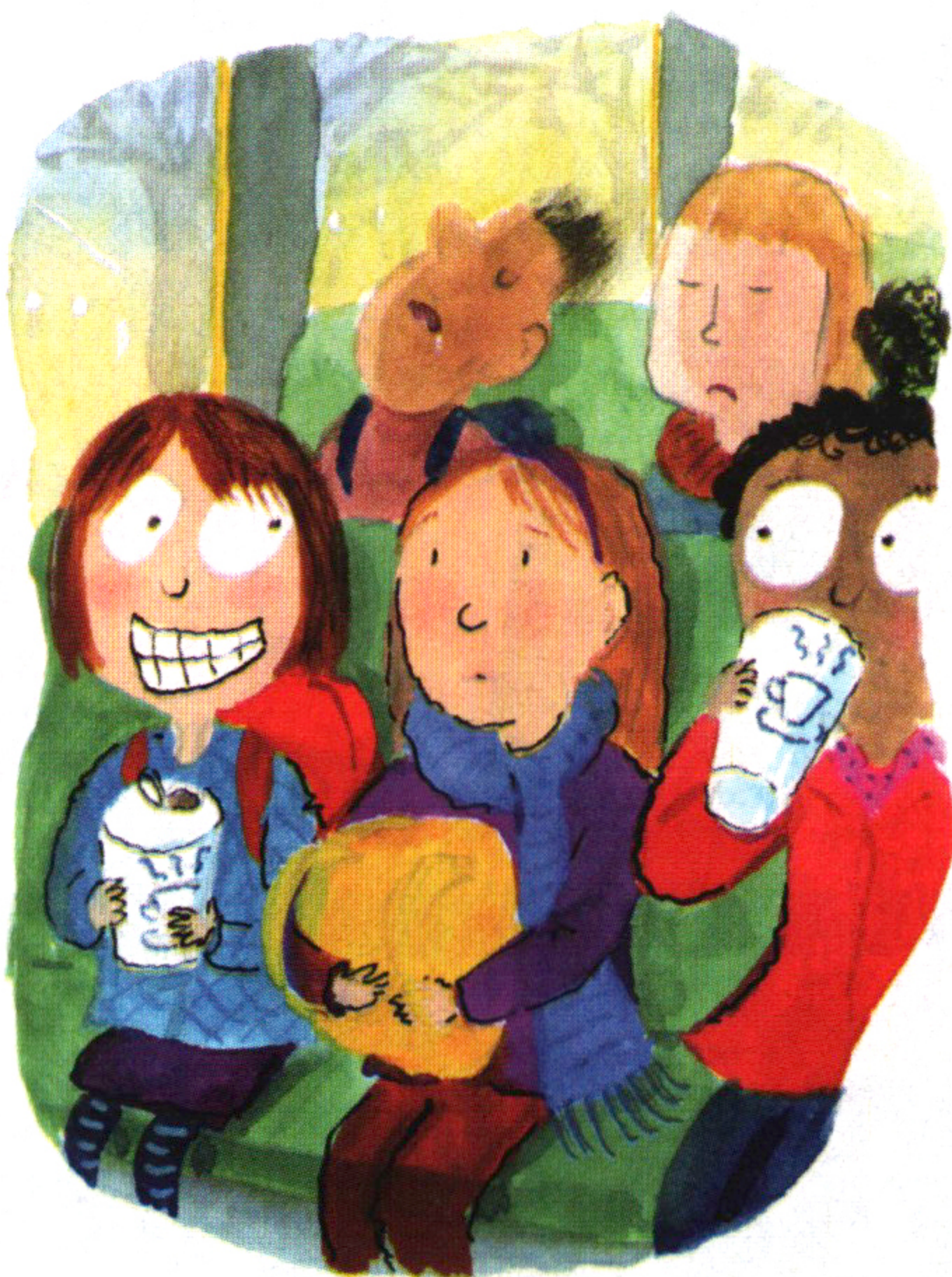


Dear American Girl,

Some of my friends at school drink coffee. My mom won't let me have coffee, even though I really want to try it. Help!

No Coffee

Your mom is looking out for you. She's got reasons for not wanting you to have coffee, so talk to her



calmly. Tell her why you want to try coffee, and listen to why she thinks it's not such a good idea. Whether you agree with her or not, understanding your mom's point of view can help you to make decisions that are right for you—whether they're about coffee or anything else.



Dear American Girl,

My friend's house just burned down! Christmas is coming, and I feel so bad for her and her family. What can I do to help?
so sad

One of the worst things about a house fire is losing things that can't be replaced, such as family photos. Together with your friends and their families, ask around

school and your neighborhood to collect photos with your friend or her family in them. Then you could make her a new photo album. Also, think about the things your friend loved most. Was it her paint set? Her sticker collection? Your friend will love anything you give to help her get her life back. But know that the best gift you can give is your friendship during this tough time.



Advice from You

"If you get upset about something, take ten deep breaths before you do anything else. That helps you to calm your feelings and start to feel braver.

I've tried it, and it works!"

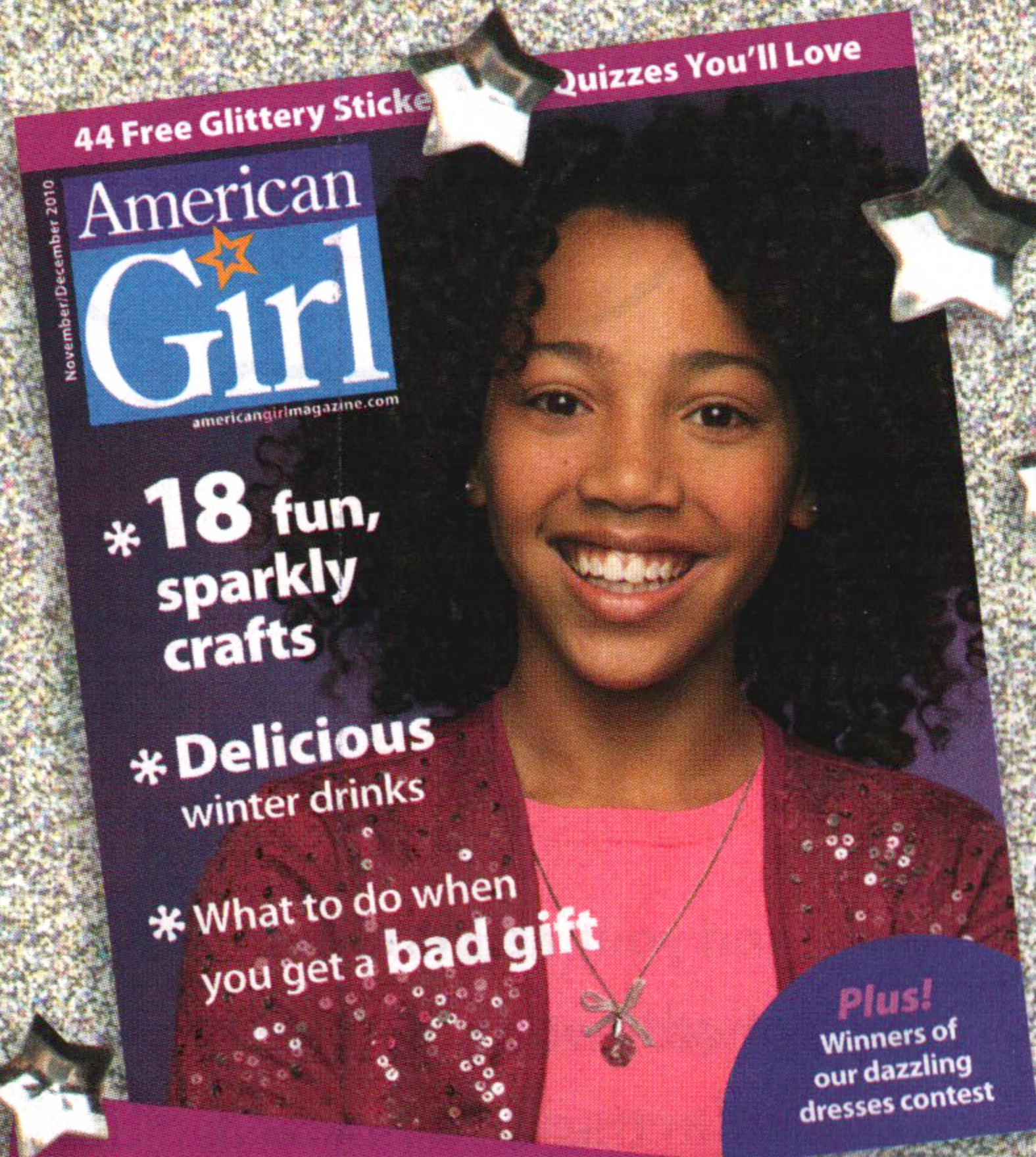
Elena M.

Age 9, Maryland

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Help!

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Each issue, readers from all over the country help us test our crafts, recipes, and more!

Behind the Scenes

American Girl wishes you a season full of sparkles and surprises!

Emma D. from California had fun testing "Sparkle Spectacular" crafts.



Jenna W. from Iowa added her own twist to the Pretty Presents craft—a glittery letter "A."



dipped
shaboook
zoobi
fluffydoodle
zwonkers

"Wow!"
cute
happy
dance move
goofy

Here are more entries from this issue's "You Said It." Can you match the wacky words to their definitions? Go to page 42 for the answers.



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